**Keeping in touch with pastoral support in the ‘Lockdown’**

I have to acknowledge how difficult (and painful even) it feels not to be able to go to see a friend or a member of our congregation during these difficult times. However, I thought I would share with you some of the things that the pastoral team are doing to try to keep in touch with each other, and to minister to each other in these strange times.

**Keeping in touch with those we would normally see on Sundays**

The pastoral team has put a ‘buddy’ scheme together so that members of the congregations at St Edmunds, Cwmdu and Tretower have contact with someone regularly both to chat to and also to be able to share with for Christian fellowship.

**Keeping in touch with those who we visit as a pastoral team**

Each pastoral visitor has a number of people that they are telephoning regularly, to make sure that they are managing and have what they need. Rev Sally Rees, and Dilys Gower are also providing some resources of a Bible reading, a prayer and a hymn choice on a theme each day that pastoral visitors can share with those with whom they are ringing, so that spiritual care can be offered during this time. Many of those we visit are not able to access internet.

**Keeping in touch with our friends in our Care Homes**

Since the week before Mothering Sunday, all the Care Homes in the area have been closed to any kind of visitor. ..and so our times of worship and activities together have been suspended for the time being, as with all other services of worship. We are still able to keep in touch by card and by phone, but as we are unable to worship together, we are trying to find other ways to provide some spiritual care at this time.

On the weekend of Mothering Sunday we left a pack with cards and resources, which Mairwen had kindly put together for us, outside the Care Homes to be picked up by a staff member. The resources had everything needed make a pretty flower design for a Mother’s Day Card and included a prayer activity that could be used whilst making the cards.

During Holy week another pack of resources were provided for staff to use with residents if desired in order to offer spiritual support. The pack included an Easter card, two sets of Bible reading notes for Older People from the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), some CDs of hymns that can would enable a hymn singing session, and some postcards to colour with a Bible reading verse on.

We dearly hope that these are helpful for both residents and staff.

**Keeping all those who we are unable to visit in prayer**

Although it is distressing not be able to see and touch those who we know and love, we can still hold each of those dear to us in prayer, by name. Jesus is still here – we have been celebrating that He is Risen, and we can pray that Jesus himself ministers to those we cannot get to right now. Our ministry has always been His work and not ours and now we have to ask him to comfort, heal and support those who are isolated through others who ARE in touch with them. Prayer is NOT a small thing, and never has been and this is the part of our ministry that has not changed, and can be strengthened at this time.

**Keeping in touch with our community**

Thank you to everyone who helped to distribute the leaflet from the back of St Edmunds church from Crickhowell Voluntary Bureau to every house in Crickhowell and surrounding areas during the week before lockdown. The Volunteer Bureau and our amazing small businesses here are doing an amazing work of supplying those who are isolating with food, provisions, prescriptions and telephone befriending. We are also able to take referrals through this scheme for anyone who would like a pastoral phone call during this time by phoning the CRiC Volunteer Bureaus number 01873 812177.

Please remember all those on the ‘front line’ whether NHS and other caring staff, shop workers, drivers, postmen and women, firemen, volunteers of all kinds (and I am sure a host more) in your prayers. In St Edmunds we are trying to do this every evening at 7pm with prayer and/or a lighting of a candle.

**Some resources that you might find helpful at this time**

1. The Anna Chaplaincy blog <https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/blog/>

has all kinds of suggestions and really worth scanning through, e.g. on Wednesday before Easter there was a very helpful leaflet to download with top tips for telephone pastoral conversations with those with Dementia called ‘Time to talk befriending’.

2. For use over the phone or as gift there are some really lovely reading notes. The BRF Reflections for Older people are great... and there are lots of other resources e.g Eddie Askew s Prayers and Meditation s (Facing the Storm; In a Strange Land etc.)

3. For keeping in touch by postcard The Leprosy mission (TLM) have boxes of 20 beautiful postcards with verses on. We are still able to post messages and these are a delightful encouragement in themselves but if course you can add your own personal note.

4. There are some fabulous resources with a Bible verses or a Christian message on them to colour. Some older people find this therapeutic and they can help people connect and commune with God while they are colouring. These include bookmarkers, postcards, cards etc and whole colouring books. There are also some colouring resources that can be downloaded from the Messy Vintage (BRF) website.

I hope this is of some help. Please feel free to ring me if I can help with pastoral care during this time. Rev Sally Rees (01873 811332)