

The churchyard is still open - and we're allowed to drive a short distance to do our exercise - if you want to walk and see the amazing bluebells that have replaced the daffodils and are still filling the air with scent and our eyes with colour.
And while you're up here you might want to walk round the Labyrinth.

There is a bucket of white stones at the beginning of the path, by the compost heap.

It can take 15 minutes to walk it, with care.

One way of using it for prayer (there are many) - is that you take your burdens, gather up the things that are holding you, the problems, the things you are troubled by, the things you want to take to God.

And you focus on them, and you hold them.

As you get nearer to the centre, you think about the things that have brought you to this place, and the things that make you hold on to those things.

And then you leave that stone, that burden, your worries, with God.

And on your journey back, you allow yourself to see where God might take you from here.

Now that you're free of those things, where might God be leading you? What new challenge might he have?

Because it seems that this virus is a challenge to us all. It is a gift, and some of us are saying - how are we going to use this? Is it by spending more time with our families or learning a new skill? Maybe by tidying our house or the garden? Perhaps we'll use this gift to think about "life". We use it to phone old friends and keep in touch with people. We use it to appreciate nature more, or keep fitter. So many things we are finding this time is good for, that its helped us.

As well as those positives, some of us are also finding this time a huge challenge too. To be cooped up with people, to be not able to go out, to be just anxious about our health and our lives, and our loved ones.

And in reality, many of us are in both places. Some days we're better, some days we're worse.

This is the challenge, though, the tough days. Because this virus has not just brought time or bird song, it has also brought real, legitimate, concern for our health and those who are most vulnerable. It has brought real concern about our incomes or jobs or pensions - these are not joys of lockdown, they are the burdens. And I wonder if its possible for us to say - why do I feel that? Is there a way to manage my feelings? Is it possible to feel differently about the same situation - what is the underlying things that make me feel like this?

How can I feel different? Is there a possibility for this to be an opportunity for me, to grow in some new way? Not just through the 'nice' things, but the things we struggle with? That is tremendously difficult. This is the depth of who we truly are.

Will this virus give us something, that will one day lead us to a place of more freedom, more hope, and a better way of being ourselves.

Rev Simon Woodley
30th April 2020

(For those of you unable to walk round or to get here, if you go to the labyrinth page on our website you can download a sheet with a mini-labyrinth on, which you can follow with your finger.)