

Thoughts from the Manse 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

Driving back in the car this morning, from a trip to Dunstable, the traffic report came on. Now I have not done much driving in the last twelve weeks but when I have the roads have been much quieter than normal and traffic reports have had far less significance. However, things are changing and the traffic on the roads has been slowly building, even so I was surprised to hear of the usual traffic jam on the M6 north of Birmingham with a seven-mile tailback affecting the M5 also. Surely, this was more than we should expect at the moment and yet I imagine the roads were quite busy last week when half a million people made their way to Bournemouth. I, and many people I know, worry that some people are ignoring the still present threat. Here in Luton the threat level is still high, as it is in Bedford and many northern towns and cities, and Leicester is currently back in full lockdown.

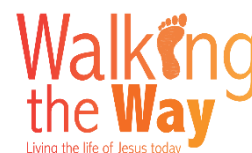


During Lockdown we saw a rekindling of community spirit, a level of care for one another and a respect for the safety of one another. There is still a real threat, as scientists repeatedly remind us. There is also a need to find the new normal which will not include half a million on Bournemouth beach at the same time. Business must begin to find its new normal and so there will be more traffic on the roads which means we must take care when driving, both the way we drive and ensuring our cars are fit for the journey. Many of the traffic reports this morning involved broken down vehicles causing obstructions.



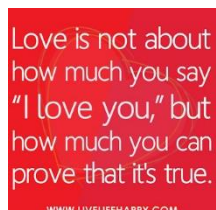
Other countries are opening up also, but we see precautions in place to prevent the scenes witnessed at Bournemouth and other places over recent weeks. We are also witnessing what happens when governments ignore the problem. We have had a quite remarkable response from the UK authorities as they recognised the threat and took measures to protect the NHS and relieve the pressure on business, and the community listened and also responded. Now, is the most dangerous time and we need to maintain a sense of community, people caring for the safety of others, if we are to come through this time as positively we can.

As Christians, we follow the way of Jesus, a way of caring for those who are more vulnerable than we are, those who have less opportunities, and working together to enable justice and love. We are interdependent, that means we are dependent on one another and the actions of one affects us all. Our prayer is for the Kingdom to come more fully every day. Lockdown has brought immense pressure on many who have struggled with loneliness, those for whom it has meant increased financial worry, and those who have had to face the reality of the virus within their family. Lockdown has also created an opportunity to re-evaluate the important things in life, to stop and smell the roses.



I follow the daily meditations from the Centre for Action and Contemplation, led by Richard Rohr, and on our website I have used one of their prayers for the community. It is prayer that is particularly relevant to today's world and so I want to highlight it here:

*O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, amen.*



Let us stand together in community, respecting the safety of others, and sharing wherever we can the love we know from God.