

Keeping Well

“The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” (LP Hartley, *The Go-Between*)

We seem to be living in a different country at the moment, don't we?

Gone are all the normal activities and usual freedoms. Many are isolated. Many are struggling with the unprecedented change. Many find it frightening. Many are anxious and worried. All those are normal feelings and having them doesn't mean your faith is lacking – nor does it mean that God is absent (even if it may feel that way at times).

The following is taken from government¹ and NHS² guidance and well-recognised good practice.

Remember, at this 'abnormal' time that people still experience what might be termed as 'normal' health problems – for example, the common cold.

Coronavirus (or Covid-19) symptoms are **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature) **or a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual). To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home.

Use - or ask someone to help you use – the 111 online coronavirus service at <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/> to find out what to do.

In times of change, it's important to hang on the things that stay the same.

- **Think about your daily routine:** When in your house, try and stick to some of the things you normally do (e.g. get up at normal time, eat your meals at the same time). Think about how you can adapt and create positive new routines – try to engage in useful activities (such as cleaning, cooking or exercise) or meaningful activities (such as reading or calling a friend). You might find it helpful to write a plan for your day or your week.
- **Do things you enjoy:** Focussing on your favourite hobby, learning something new or simply taking time to relax indoors should give you some relief from anxious thoughts and feelings. If you can't do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, try to think about how you could adapt them, or try something new.
- **Keep your mind active:** Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting. Find something that works for you.
- **If you can, once a day get outside, or bring nature in:** Spending time in green spaces can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. If you can't get outside much you can try to still get these positive effects by spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into the garden if you can.
- **Consider how to connect with others:** Maintaining relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. Think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family via telephone, video calls or social media instead of meeting in person – whether it's people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.

- **Help and support others:** Think about how you could help those around you – it could make a big difference to them and can make you feel better too. Could you message a friend or family member nearby?
- **Talk about your worries:** It is quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember that this is a difficult time for everyone and sharing how you are feeling and the things you are doing to cope with family and friends can help them too.
- **Look after your physical wellbeing:** Your physical health has a big impact on how you are feeling emotionally and mentally. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise inside where possible and outside once a day.
- **Look after your sleep:** Feeling anxious or worried can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically. Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep good sleep hygiene.
- **Manage your media and information intake:** 24-hour news and constant social media updates can make you more worried. If it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading, or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limiting to a couple of checks a day.
- **Get the facts:** Don't listen to gossip, rumour or myths about Coronavirus. Find a credible source you can trust such as [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), or the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk) at nhs.uk. Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.
- **Coping with change** is often difficult. It takes time to adjust not only to the practical changes but also the internal adjustments it brings about: who we are, where we belong etc. This transition often takes time so be kind to yourself as you process these adjustments.³

Many people in our congregations are used to living on their own. Perhaps they can give you some tips and ideas on how to manage at this time?

Be assured of continued prayers from the ministry team and many others.

PS The Church of England have produced a helpful booklet called *Supporting Good Mental Health* – it's available to download at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/10961•Mental%20Health%20Reflections_WEB.pdf and printed versions may be available soon.

¹ Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19) Public Health England 29 March 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19#what-can-help-your-mental-health-and-wellbeing>

² <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

³ Paraphrased from 'Coping with Change' – author unknown; original provided by Diocese of Exeter.