



Open-Source Theology in the Diocese of Exeter Theological Reflections on being Church during the COVID-19 Restrictions

The following thoughts were contributed as part of a survey sent to Beneficed Readers and Clergy in the Diocese of Exeter. A wider group were invited to contribute via links on the diocesan Facebook page, but 194 of the 199 responses were from the e-mail invitation. They answer the question: "Have you been able to reflect theologically on how you are currently being church and conducting your ministry? What are your conclusions?" To give a level of anonymity, where respondents used the names of people or places, these have been changed to a generic description or job title.

It should be noted that this is a snapshot of the espoused theology of ministers in the diocese five weeks after churches were closed for public worship and a month after they were closed for private prayer. As many have mentioned in their responses, this has been a time of ongoing reflection and adaptation, although Holy Week, the increased demands of pastoral care at a physical distance and engaging with new needs in the local community, mean that many leaders have not had the opportunity to stop and engage in extended theological dialogue with their colleagues or congregations.

These responses have been collated and circulated in the hope that our corporate reflection and ongoing conversation will help us to understand our current situation, to see how God is at work in the current crisis and to build a theological foundation for our future mission. I have attempted to arrange the different contribution thematically so, where a quote contains a number of different ideas, I have tried to discern the predominant theme. Please accept my apologies if your response is in a section which you feel misses the point of what you were saying. Due to the number of responses, and the detailed thought which has gone into them, this is a long document. Please don't see it as an additional burden to wade through, but a resource to dip-in to, to stimulate our thinking as colleagues, practical theologians and leaders in mission in the diocese.

Jon Marlow
Mission Community Development Team Leader
25th April 2020

CHURCH WITHOUT WALLS

The largest theme emerging from the response was that the church is the people not the building, and that being unable to meet physically in church has meant that homes are now a place of worship and mission. Presence is more than just physical, and removing the barriers of time and space is allow people to see church and join in where they could not before.

- Jesus is a guest where he is invited in to each and every home. We have set up a community support group in [the village], and have been encouraged by the no. of people volunteering help re shopping, phone calls to the over 70's or those at home for other reasons. Collecting prescriptions etc. As a Reader, I take assembly in local community primary but rarely meet parents, so great to catch up and meet them too.
- As a Reader I have not been involved for a month now in Sunday Worship preparation nor preaching. However my unique ministry has been to Care Homes one of which invited me to conduct a service of hymns readings and prayers, via Zoom to a laptop connected to their lounge TV. This went well enough for them to invite to do so again over the Easter weekend. This too went well. Regarding the social action in our two villages, the Vicar has chaired the practical care response for [The village]. Pastoral care of church contacts is being addressed from several points of contact, primarily through our pastoral visiting team and wider. Church without walls is our developing concept. We're excited to think how we might carry on the best of what we now do into the future after 'stay at home' period.
- I'm hoping that this has enabled people to put Sunday worship services in their proper context as 'the church gathered', and not as 'going to church'.
- I have a personal passion for doing church differently and reaching those who do not naturally frequent church buildings. The present situation has sort of turned that around as we find ways of taking church into the homes of our regular congregations. I miss being able to reach out to those outside our churches. There is no way of contacting those who have not yet come to faith during this time and probably need contact with churches more than ever. All we can do, at the moment, is pray.
- Investment needs to be made in tech, Wi-Fi and training in our churches if we are to stream live services. This also needs to be normalised when we leave lock-down. God created all things visible and invisible. The fishing net metaphor needs to become the fishing inter-net. We are in a sea change, let us get our e-nets out! The political vision for universal access to the internet doesn't seem so naive now.
- In the middle of this! However, A phrase from my Hero Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy comes to mind, when he said: " If we declare our Love for God in our churches, but hate our neighbour in our factory (mill, mine community, etc.) then God would rather we tear our churches down, for he must hate the sight of them. We are now unable to use our Church buildings to declare our love for God, so we are forced to concentrate declaring our love for God by demonstrating his love for our neighbours. I have been in the ordained ministry for 25 years, and, involved in the daily worship of the church for 46 years. And apart from being part of a cathedral set up, I have never had more than one person occasionally join me for the daily offices. Now I am joined every day by at least one or two, sometimes more!
- We have worked out a communication pyramid with a 'staff member' (using the term loosely) responsible for each of the churches. I'm really enjoying engaging with one congregation in depth. It is really refreshing after trying to relate to many parishes.
- The church has always been about the people and not the building. This situation is forcing me even more to work out even more how to connect people to God and each other. At the

moment I feel that it's got the church back in people's homes and practicing faith in their everyday lives. But it is a challenge keeping people engaged and ensuring people don't fall through the gaps. Having services online - and therefore viewable by anyone - is also causing me to reflect on how accessible our services are to visitors particularly non-Christians. Lots of food for thought and prayer!

- I think this is brilliant - the church is often constrained by its walls. Even the identical 'service' in church would not have had the impact that doing it as a podcast has done. Many people felt spiritually uplifted by it. I certainly felt that the first approach (from non-church members), and the strength and ideas of how to do it, were God's good gift to us all
- I think I've turned into a bit of a blogger! Whether that's a good thing I not sure. I've used LICC's website and have used there no-weekly emails on occasion. It seems to fit in with the present climate of being church Monday -Saturday, not just Sunday, and I have used the phrase 'relative's It's been good that although I'm emailing, I can vary the format, like hymn/song on YouTube, a video clip on YouTube for the children. Prayers have been mainly me with emails sent from congregation suggesting others to include, which I have done the following day.
- In the current situation people generally have come to realise the value of the relationships they have with loved ones, neighbours and local community and the church (people) is part of that network. The church as the body of Christ I suggest is being seen more as a presence in the community than before. When their freedom is taken away, I think people reflect more on the meaning of life and whether there is a God in all this. The practical side (leading worship/pastoral) of my Reader ministry has essentially stopped and the spiritual side increased with more personal prayer and telephone contact.
- It has become evident from feedback that our recorded services play an important part in many people's lives. Services are reaching people that do not usually attend church. When the lock down is over, we are seriously considering continuing to record our services for people to access.
- How we encourage people to pray at homes needs more prominence in our thinking. We are too church centred.
- it has been an amazing mission opportunity. People who wouldn't step foot through the physical building are tuning in and engaging. i am mindful, and full of trepidation, about the next stage, the exit strategy. I would appreciate some practical and theological input from diocese - how will we handle cleaning to a safe standard? How will we maintain being a Eucharistic church and safely handle the elements? (i would not feel comfortable being the only one to receive bread and wine for a long period of time - and this experience of trauma will reverberate long after the 18month period commonly held as the virus being active in); and how will we handle pastorally and responsibly the fact that many of our congregations fall into the very vulnerable bracket, and prematurely going back into the physical buildings will tempt them out of safe isolation? Yet there are already financial worries that may be pushing some to hope for a speedy return to the buildings themselves... for myself, I am reaching more people than I can regularly. I realise just how much as a parish priest I am constantly on the move and how much that demands of me in terms of my energy and attention. It is making me reassess what exactly do we need to be doing in order to communicate the love of God?
- Only in as much as it's good for the church to get out the pews and bring church into countless homes. If it wasn't for the very serious nature of the pandemic, I'd be quite excited. Why we do things as we do is done prayerfully and thoughtfully.
- I am delighted by the challenge we are facing to serve in a different way and I hope that we will not stop doing everything we have had to start when life returns to 'normal'. I think that the lockdown has enabled us to communicate the Gospel to more people, certainly more people

here my sermons than is ever possible when I preach in church. I am also delighted that there is a great deal of 'competition' which many people are accessing as well - the advantage of videoed services over live streaming is that people can listen to the Archbishop and to me without having to decide who they want to hear the most. I also know that almost all of my parishioners would wish to be with each other in church, be able to receive the sacrament, share the peace, have coffee together but are accepting of the restrictions we face - I don't have any reason to believe at the moment that the pandemic will have any detrimental effect on involvement or attendance in the long term.

- Church continues but the pews are wider apart (metaphorically! we are not breaking the rules). This is a time for people reflecting on what their faith means without physical church attendance. It has potential for unexpected growth
- While we are dispersed, we are the body of Christ - how appropriate our Mass readings during Easter are from the Acts of the Apostles. People are greatly missing the opportunity to gather together - a huge party is being planned for when we can worship together again.
- This is an ongoing process and is changing as we move forward. Initial thoughts are: a welcome break from the over-emphasis on buildings; living out the truth that the church is the people not the building; engaging with the reality that we are united by the Holy Spirit regardless of physical isolation or separation. I am even more aware that I am 'pastoring' a community that even stretches overseas to the USA and Australia!! Rejoicing in the ever-relevant message of the Gospel to whatever situation we are facing.
- I said in the first week that two things were my priority: 1. That everyone should be in contact by phone as much as possible. I call every congregation member each week. 2. I wanted everyone to have the same experience - something that we are all sharing and which should create a strong sense of unity. I advertise the time that I am doing the service at home and I think many people join in that way. Reading them aloud if there are 2 or more at home, or just reading to themselves
- One of our core convictions is that the Word of God does the work of God in the people of God through the Spirit of God. This means that we have aimed to ensure that opening the Bible is central to our live-stream services and our content creation. We have been encouraged to see how God continues to work through His Word in His people even when we can't gather together. Looking ahead we want to be thinking how we can encourage our congregation (1) to read the Bible and pray by themselves at home, and (2) to use available technology (video calling etc.) to read the Bible with others, e.g. on a one-to-one basis. For the latter we will be encouraging people to use the fantastic online resources A Better Hero (a short series of seeker-accessible studies in Mark) and A Better Life (the same in John), available online at www.somethingbetter.org.uk. We are very conscious that "church" means "gathering". In terms of Sunday services this affects (1) how we describe what we are doing when we advertise it and (2) the platform we have chosen to use - because it was the clear choice to include some interactivity through text comments while remaining open for outsiders to join in (unlike a platform like Hangouts or Zoom). This conviction has also led us to be intentional about ensuring we have other opportunities to "gather" (after-service coffee, prayer meetings and home groups). While others have made different choices, our conviction is that Holy Communion is something you cannot do remotely, and something with which you cannot participate just by watching, and so we have avoided doing it in any of our services. This is, we hope, creating even more longing for the face-to-face community to which we so dearly want to return soon.
- It all feels strange but I'm getting used to it. What will a 'new normal' look like when this is over?
- Very much still 'church' and 'church' is never going to be quite the same as it was.

- Comments reflect the appreciation and necessity of prayer. I suspect this might have a lasting effect on our prayer life. Comments also show a strong sense of the church as family
- Church without the buildings Fellowship, without "where 2 or more are gathered" The Stillness of silence and the voice of God within
- Several people have made comments about watching and being involved in streamed services. Many have valued and appreciated the C of E services, Exeter cathedral services etc and the Archbishop Easter Service. It is a completely different experience from being physically in the church building but I have felt totally involved and included as others have. Something to think about for the future as whether we should always stream services for those who are unable to get to a service because of illness or caring for an ill spouse or child. I am taking some funerals at the crematorium so am using the shortened service Bishop Robert sent through at the beginning of April. I personalise the service even though there are only a couple of relatives there. It is a great privilege to be able to take a funeral and we look forward to when we can have celebration of the peoples' lives with all their family and friends present.
- I am starting to now but that's mainly because I have to write out reflections for my portfolio. I think we are reaching our church congregations who are moving with us. I'm now wondering how we meet with those people who are on the periphery
- Definitely. It feels God is creating a lot of prayer cells in our homes. He is breaking down the walls of our churches and taking us out. Being part of a dispersed Christian community, there is a sense that there is nothing new here. In some ways it is creating greater community as we are in touch with folk by phone more than previously. There is an openness to prayer on the phone. We are all being shaken. Ministry feels much more people focused and less building centred. There are more opportunities around the community. We do have to have a serious discussion about communion.
- One of the most powerful evangelistic tools is for unchurched people to witness authentic worship taking place. Live-streaming is Mission. It is also a chance for people to share in worship in a very public way. Too often our faith is hidden. When people type in live prayer requests they are evidencing to the world the reality of their faith. I feel that we are shining like stars in the world (Philippians)
- It is difficult to speak to 'the air', but we are a church that is always visitor focussed and we have tried to keep the non-church use of language going. We are missing our coffee time together before the service so are going to introduce this via zoom. Church is about the people not the building but there is something wonderful about gathering together corporately, however we are also seeing that people are finding it easier to dip into services where they can be anonymous. There are a lot of Christians out there who like to go from service to service!!
- I have given this some thought and it seems to me that it is a very different way of being church but if the threads of love and connection are there it still feels like church. I feel concerned that some are excluded simply because they do not have the technology. If we had had warning we could have done something about it but these are un-chartered waters so we just walk with God in hope and prayer.
- Christ's ministry was incarnational, church isn't, the pace of change glacial, dragged some distance behind society. We expect people to come to cold buildings with basic or no toilets and sit on uncomfortable pews and listen to liturgy that is decades out of date and when they don't we are surprised. Then when ministers and PCC's attempt to change this they are exhausted by paperwork, bureaucracy and associated cost. Moving online allows people to view a service when it suits them, potentially while the kids play football on a Sunday morning on their phone

or when the family is all together. They can be comfortable, warm and use a clean and modern bathroom. The challenge is integrating that and fellowship.

- It feels very hospitable to invite folk into our home. Communion feels slightly strange as it can't be truly interactive and it's also not live - although it's lovely for us to celebrate it. I liked the current cartoon of the Devil exulting over shutting the churches, with God responding that on the contrary - there was now a church in every home. It is amazing to phone round people in the congregation - every single person has responded so positively, even those who are on our list because we did a baptism. And people are being so kind and caring for each other. We knew we were due for an overhaul of our pastoral care system - but so much of it is going on naturally with people caring for each other. I can't go out and visit, but the openness of people to a phone call has meant that I have got to know so many people, so much better. I don't know if we've made new disciples - when we emerge, I hope that we will find we have - but we have grown in prayer and we are definitely serving the people of Devon with joy! Some people have reflected to me that they have got to know neighbours so well and have found great kindness and that their prayer is, that this continues after the crisis.
- A little. We still have big questions about worship online and whether it really qualifies as 'church' however we are reaching a group of people we hadn't reached before. We are also aware that online church is a very crowded market and we don't want to compete for viewers. Theologically this is something we are pondering.
- Yes, constantly. We are building up committed members of the church as well as reaching out to the community. Fringe members are getting drawn in and joining home groups which would have been difficult before and are making substantial progress.
- I feel that I am being much more effective. Phone calls and Zoom meetings allow very effective person ministries. Teamwork is going well. Morning Prayer is vibrant. - God has blessed us in this time.
- Church is a community. We are learning how to be a community in a different way. I am part-time which means I am used to having to respond to people from afar and I am not always available. There is a need to be available in a new way and to be a presence through weekly letters, which have not been done before.
- Fortunately St Jude's isn't really that sacramental, so not being able to do a Communion hasn't been an issue so far. Equally, a history of varied people doing things has worked well in using different voices for prayers etc. with three different people doing the Sunday sermons so far. Missionally, the Vicar in a Shed short thoughts have been interesting that folk are seemingly willing to share them with friends. Their content is light and I think some just think it's quirky and amusing to encourage their friend or relative to look at their 'Vicar in a Shed'. I suspect the core of St Jude's will do OK as there is a large % of folk here who do read and reflect on scripture and pray. Our small groups appear to be doing well at keeping in touch by phone. I don't have conclusions at all yet, but I think we may discern more and more what is important about our faith and personal relationships with Jesus, build on our community care and interaction more and probably less 'religious' than we already are.
- There is a well-accepted understanding amongst our people that this is reminding us that Church is about people not buildings.
- The church is the people in the world, not the building....obvious really.
- The Church having to go online is a fantastic thing that should have happened years ago. We are reaching people who might otherwise be busy on a Sunday at 10am. Church services are accessible 24/7.

- A few thoughts - Being church is so much more obviously more than our buildings, beautiful as they might be. Connection with my congregations- phone calls, emails and within Stoke Fleming occasional socially distanced conversations when out dog walking. Although I am very busy with the necessary admin/ cascading information as MC Vicar and Rural Dean, and everything mentioned above, my ministry is very different and much more contemplative. In a bizarre way, this time is partly a gift. I want to think more about this!
- Holy Week was akin to being on deployment at sea. In these situations few are able to get to services. Church still happens. However in this situation there have been more 'hits' on our YouTube services - greater than on our electoral roll. No conclusions as yet
- It seems as if God is both testing us and rewarding us. We are tested by not having face to face contact in our churches but we are finding huge support for being prepared to step outside of our comfort zones. God is still sovereign and still present in the all of our lives as we trust him to be with us in these new initiatives.
- Too early really - apart from the fact we don't absolutely need church buildings to be church (but I [I'm a Team Reader not the incumbent] thought that already - others probably feel differently). God is bringing a lot of good things out of this time.
- Church isn't about the building it's about the Body of Christ, which is the people.
- We are still conveying and promoting the presence of God through our Interactive Services and blogs, and a strong sense of community. The zoomed services don't have all of the old-style liturgy and therefore seem more spontaneous and crisp.
- A bit! Many have commented on how the Bible has really become a living truth and presence for them - as indeed simple times 'together' have nourished their appetite and practice of prayer. As a leadership team we are turning our thoughts to what we are learning and what implications these lessons have for the future.
- It is doing 'church' differently, and in some respects more effectively in that it is being in touch with those people who are most in need, i.e. living on their own, people who need social contact. It has brought to people's attention what is important in life, and it is seeing and talking with other people. We are social creatures and we need each other. It is about addressing our problems together and about responding to our need for Spiritual Reflection and our need for God, especially at this time, and indeed the world. He gives us Hope. The knowledge that He loves us is knowing that the Gospel is meant for sharing.
- The churches across our Benefice differ widely on their approach to 'being church'. Some are very happy with watching YouTube feeds or broadcasted services. These churches tend to be more traditional or have an affinity to high church. Those in the Benefice that have a leaning towards low-church prefer the social aspect of church and prefer a live interactive service. The closure of churches has served to highlight the difference across our Benefice with some enjoying the opportunity to be church in a different way and some feeling that the church has deserted them in their time of need. Having to be isolated myself has been a challenge to my ministry but has been a time of refreshment to my faith.
- We are having to work harder but are drawing closer to people
- We believe this is as much "church" as meeting in the building. It shows what church is really about.
- We are every bit as much Church - at least those of us able to access these newer forms of church. It's a different story for those not conversant with technology or who choose not to engage with this form of Church.
- Yes - as with all we do. Conclusions relate to Gospel values of engaging with as many as possible, ensuring that we use the new styles of communication and media to nurture those

who are part of our community, and to share the 'Good News' widely - so that it seems like good news. We are also aware that we need to give people room to be frightened, sad and upset - not to always seek to appear strong and jolly ourselves -but to recognise that we must model a range of responses to allow others to express themselves with honesty and depth.

- Yes. It has helped myself, and others, to understand that it is the community of worshippers which is central and not allegiance to a particular building. Reemphasis on pastoral ministry and engagement with wider community as central to mission.
- Very interesting question. Bishop Robert's most recent Ad Clerum points up the natural tendency when frightened to close down as Jesus' disciples did. Our new Rector who has yet to meet his flock in the flesh finds himself ministering to all four parishes at the same time via IT. We are very concerned for those not so connected. The use of posted newsletters, news and encouragement to try a telephone connection are in place. There is I believe a genuine theological conundrum. Has God closed our churches to teach us a lesson? Perhaps. I am inclined to argue that we are being led in a very different direction and that closed churches is a manifestation of closed spiritual souls who like the disciples of Jesus (for a while) felt safer in a locked room. Are we to break away from centuries of traditional worship in some other direction?
- We had just finished a series from LICC 'Frontline Sundays' so had been thawing about how we are all church all the time so it is really good to remind people that we are the church and the fact the building is not being used does not affect that at all. I have begun to pray through the electoral roll every day and am finding that really valuable as a way of 'taking care of the flock'. For some time I have been trying to 'be' rather than 'do' and working out what that looks like and how to model that to the community, thank goodness as we now are forced into a time of being so I am finding that it doesn't make me panic or question what my ministry is about. I have also been reflecting on being prepared in season and out not sure of my conclusions yet
- Church is not buildings and people are getting that. Mission and pastoral care continues well (opportunities to get shopping for those over 70 etc.). Strange that some priests conduct communion for themselves and others can't receive but only watch. Not sure if this works well theologically or pastorally. Needs some clearer leadership
- Worship needs to be combined with other means of communications (we have a weekly newsletter) and positive pastoral care.
- Haven't had much time for theological reflection. However the idea that this is taking us back to the model of the early church is facile. The early church was marked by greater hospitality, crossing more boundaries, physical care for a wider range of people than before. The opportunities for proclamation are numerous but it has to be backed with authentic action. The time for personal prayer is more minimal with two working parents and schooling for three children expected to be done at home. When I have time for theological reflection I'll let you know.
- Just that keeping in contact, in various ways, seems to be essential
- Yes but not sure we are using the technology to its full potential
- Having established a working network of telephone contacts between all our usual church members, plus a few on the fringes, I think this experience has generated a new closeness and willingness to share and hear each other's' stories. I am hoping that the experience for many of our people is that the church building is NOT the central part of their faith, and that being a Christian is something that happens at home.
- Yes. For me it has reinforced my previous understanding and firm belief that the body of Christ is the people and not necessarily the building. The buildings are important, but not the be all and

end all. It has also highlighted to me the distance between mine and other clergy colleagues understanding of what it means to be Church, and the understanding of Church held by parishioners. Many parishioners, I think, are not engaging for a variety of reasons, but not least, because no building means no Church. There is much work and teaching to be done. This crisis and how we do Church has also given me time to think about the Eucharist and the theological understanding of what it is and why we do it. There has been a fair amount of internet activity assigned to this subject and so I won't repeat it all here. This link takes you to a parish priest who articulates it much more eloquently than I could. <https://bit.ly/3aozj01>

- Our church is outside the building but our church families are meeting God in their homes.
- Echoing a point in the Church Times 17/04, in the same way as the printing press opened access to the Bible, so the coronavirus and social media has opened access to presenting the gospel in new and relevant ways. There is simply no question in my mind: for both society and Church, there will be no return to 'normal' and we must grasp the opportunities on offer. I have been struck again and again by people's generosity: the 3 Foodbank boxes formerly inside two places of worship are now outside 3 homes, including this Rectory, and are well received. We have links with three local Help a Neighbour schemes. Landline conversations generate warmth and care, and are appreciated, especially by older folk. God is bringing both old and new things out of the store, and we must be flexible as to how we are Church going forwards. We must be in the forefront of all that is happening and will happen.
- Theologically, it reminds us the Church is not the building, but the people and in knowing there are services taking place which members can share is an appreciated strength. For my ministry making regular contact with my group of parishioners is very rewarding.
- There is a new sense of us being church together in our own homes. Zoom and phone communication has meant we can be more personal with many of our folk, but it requires more time and effort to ensure everyone is included. We have the potential to reach out missionally to those on the fringe and to those who have had no contact with church. We might miss the physicality of Communion twice a month, but we are nevertheless very aware of God's presence. I wonder whether Jesus would have banned his disciples from receiving bread and wine in their own homes during a live-streamed Communion because of the current lockdown. There are Bible stories that strongly suggest otherwise, and I think the Church will need to develop its theological thinking as 'spiritual communion' is not the answer.
- Five lessons: There is a different sense of time, each day and week seems more significant. The need for a routine and structure to each week. Although we cannot be physically present with each other, we are far more available for each other than we ever were. It has been good to see how the lay visiting team has really stepped up their care and support for the congregation. So many meetings and so much paperwork that seemed so important now seems far less relevant and it is in one sense good to return to the basics of parish ministry (although we have experienced some real tragedies). The rediscovery of the priority of preaching and teaching - Holy Communion can only properly happen once we are all together once again.
- Choosing to go with Zoom services as opposed to pre-recorded services has increased the sense of being together and believing and belonging to the Mission Community and the wider church. As many people live in isolated housing or farms they do not enjoy seeing the passers-by in the same way urban folk do. This worship time along with the social time has been precious for many especially the medically isolated folk. Compline has been very well attended compared to when offered in church and has been well supported by a Cantor to help us worship together. This has offered a more prayerful encounter for folk who normally do not attend these services. Do we continue to offer these types of worship in the future after the lockdown ceases?

- Continued bible study and daily prayers, and the feedback received by some of my parishioners and non-parishioners.
- During these times of such uncertainty, I have been reflecting theologically on what it means to be church. I do think we are blessed with wonderful buildings for our worship, but if church is the living stones; the people- then this crisis where the buildings cannot be used, the living stones become our focus. How church communities with different traditions and background answer the question of what it means to be church, will govern how they have responded during the crisis. In the Sid Valley we have six very different church communities with different expressions of church. During this season we have all benefited from being one Mission Community, and in many ways are becoming stronger for it. Our wardens, who in regular consultation with our Rector, are doing a very good job under difficult circumstances; through different forms of communication, many are accessing material, which would not be their normal expression of worship, with positive feedback, which is encouraging. If we believe that God works in all situations, then He is at work during this pandemic. It has been said that the definition of mission is to find out what God is doing and join in. I believe that, here in the Sid valley, we are sensing God at work and joining in. We are achieving this by being in the centre of life in our community, albeit in ways that we do, but maybe not in such an explicit way. Large numbers of our church members have signed up to deliver urgent food parcels, get medication, prescriptions etc. Those who are isolated have been phoned on a regular basis and contact made with. In the midst of such pain and despair caused by this unrelenting virus, as people of God, we have been called to be beacons of light. As church leaders, we have been actively encouraging our congregations to consider a new rhythm which places prayer and scripture at the centre of their daily life. I have been drawn back to the book of Acts and how the early church was formed and began to grow through the way they gathered together and put others before themselves. This servant hearted ministry is important during a time of restriction but should also be a long term goal when we are not. I consider it has been our role as leaders to almost get out of the way and allow those in our mission community to flourish and thrive through it, whilst supporting them in every way we can. One area where we have had to adapt very quickly to is how we conduct our ministry. Due to the restrictions, there has been almost no physical face to face contact. Video calling has become important, as have phone conversations. It has been really affirming to be able to enable and equip our pastoral support team to provide support networks for so many people within our congregations. This has meant that all pastoral support does not rely solely as the responsibility of the ministers. I have found it really helpful to have access to different guidance from the Dioceses and nationally. The notes on pastoral contact over the phone were excellent. Our normal activity of leading services which have been taken away from us has led us to find new and creative ways of being church and leading people into a place of worship and the presence of the Lord from their own homes. I believe the lessons we have learnt through this as ministers have allowed us to step out in faith and take prayerfully considered risks. This has added to our own spiritual formation and ministry among those we are called to serve. I truly believe that we will not go back to how we were. There will be a new normal, with lessons learnt throughout this crisis which will strengthen us as a church moving forward. I hope that the level of contact that we have had during this crisis with every member of our congregations and with the wider community continues develop and grow. In the midst of such tragic circumstances I believe that the opportunities that we have to share the good news we have in Jesus in new and creative ways is exciting. An opportunity, that is to be embraced.
- The church has always been for the people, and it is rearranging priorities. Conducting ministry has different challenges, in that, the whole process of technical reach has invaded private space.. This heightens awareness of protecting boundaries.

- We are certainly looking forward to coming back together... but are already starting to ask the questions "what of what we have put down should we pick back up, and what should stay down?" Small groups have flourished which is great... more groups, more people, meeting more often
- We are the people of God wherever we are. Jesus comes and stands among us and breathes on us and fills us in our homes as we worship and this is giving a new dimension in the growth as disciples. Prayer and praise and learning are taking place in the heart of the home for people - not just 'Sunday Church'. This could be profoundly important in their prayer life and growth as disciples. We are a church without walls and without parochial boundaries. It is sad that we can't meet in church and receive communion together but we are the church of Jesus Christ and there is a joy in that coming together in these difficult times and sharing in joys and sorrows in the context of our times.
- Shattering the boundaries of what people understand church to really mean. I have regularly reinforced this throughout my ministry in this unusual time, how it is our unity in Christ before our physical gathering than means we are His church.
- Apart from the obvious about the Church being people not buildings, it has been making us think also about the importance of place (i.e. Church buildings) for many people's spirituality. There is something about helping people to develop a prayer-life at home - e.g. how can families mark the liturgical year at home and something to about facing our own mortality in the light of the Resurrection hope.

LOSS AND LONGING FOR PHYSICAL MEETING

Despite the positivity of the above, there is still a deep sense of loss and longing to meet physically again. This is compounded by the expectation that many of our congregations will still be unable to attend, even when public worship is once again permitted. Some respondents expressed this using the biblical metaphors of exile and wilderness.

- There is much in the Bible about solitude and the wilderness that speaks into where we currently are. This is often a time when faith is deepened and God's presence becomes more tangible. Many in our congregations are feeling bereft (and angry!) without a building but encouraging people to see themselves as church and prayer as effective has been enlightening. Many in our churches are busy and active in serving their communities, when this is stripped away and we are called to 'be' in God's presence, faith grows in a new way and we are exposed to the distractions that doing 'for' God can sometimes prevent us from coming close by just being. My own prayer life has been revitalised by this time and I have been sharing short reflections across the MC weekly (aside from services) that have brought comfort and insight to the congregations. Finding new ways to connect with people and helping them reframe their own faith has been hugely beneficial.
- Services lack the fellowship and feeling of family. Really good to be connected with the worshipping congregations of Bovey Tracey.
- I phone all congregation members each week. This has been an opportunity for more conversations and also managing to engage with spouses who do not attend church. Good as this has been, we are missing the opportunity to gather as God's people. Given the lack of communal gathering I do not find any desire for an online communion service.
- I am trying to ensure that we have in place the basics. I have always found the opening to MP in the BCP so helpful when thinking about church services: 'thanks, praise, hear the word and pray.'

What is missing is the 'assemble and meet together.' I think people are enjoying the novelty and seeing familiar faces during this trying time but I think we will be left feeling unsatisfied with it if this was our normal fare. I am hoping that it will help us see what is essential for our gatherings and what is not so essential.

- There is the loss of physically meeting. One outcome I can see is that if we keep Zoom Morning Prayer going, as people go into care homes, we will stay in contact with them and they will still feel part of church. So, when we go back to the building we should think about how to carry a Zoom link into the Sunday service.
- Jesus fed 5000 people using scarce resources. The sudden closure of our church buildings left us with "scarce resources" but God gives us what we need. We are being church using just the humble telephone and encouraging far more people on a Sunday morning to worship God than we ever did in our Grade 1-listed buildings. Our loss is sacramental worship; virtual, intangible worship is a poor substitute for the physical, tangible signs of God's presence among us. We are physical, human beings and Jesus used physical materials to interact with us and teach us about God - bread, wine, oil, water. Perhaps this time is an opportunity for us to focus more on creation, the gifts of the Father Creator around us (particularly here in this place) and on the more intangible gifts of the Spirit, to think about the breath/wind of the Spirit as we approach Pentecost and as we pray Thy Kingdom Come. Many people see a barrier between sacred and secular. I rejoice that this experience is teaching us as never before that God is everywhere, that our "acceptable worship" can be as much in the kitchen as at the altar. If the churches were still to be open I would find ministry more difficult in this MC - how to be present fairly in 6 churches when we are all being encouraged to stay at home. As it is I am present and available equally to everyone, church community and wider community in each village. Our efforts to organise community support in each village before the lockdown is enabling a practical working out of the "royal priesthood". The vulnerability of self-isolation is teaching us that it is often more difficult to receive than it is to give.
- People miss their church. What we offer is fairly amateur in many ways, but I think it is valued because a. It is local b. It is a face and a voice they know and trust. I have not tried to make the services an imitation of what people are used to in church. For example I have not set up an altar in my house and when celebrating the Eucharist simply use a table without any great ecclesiastical decoration. We are a church which uses vestments and ceremonies, but at home I simply put on a stole to show I am doing something priestly. I think this helps people to see the church is self-isolating just like them! Though I am aware what we do is amateur compared with some, and I would be happy to be a little more polished, I would shy away from pretending that the local church should have professional presentation. It needs to retain the personal touch. Those wanting something more can find it in the national church broadcasts. We are a parish church, so we want to remain a local church and have faces and voices which are familiar. We are a Eucharistic church and no live streaming can replace the importance of folk coming together to worship and receive the sacrament in their hands. However I think we are proper church. We offer worship to God, remain faithful and allow people to pray and worship. To a certain extent we also proclaim, and as some people not usually in church are watching, we are evangelistic. I am very aware of not being able to offer baptisms and weddings, nor a very full funeral ministry as visiting is impossible. Pastoral ministry is also curtailed - I phone at least 10 people each day, but nothing replaces face to face meeting, and still less does a phone call replace being with those who are ill or bereaved. I am very aware that we are dividing people into two groups - those with internet and those without. This cannot be healthy for a church which wants to attract all ages. What might remain after life gets some sort of normality back? I would expect much of the teaching ministry now to be on line in some way.

- For me the biggest challenge is being able to minister to those who don't have access to IT and who might be in greatest need of pastoral care. The good old fashioned telephone will have to suffice.
- Many have said that the church is not its buildings. This pandemic forces us to prove this assertion and, sadly, for some it fails. They miss the physical meeting, the location, the pomp and the liturgy. But praying together, whilst physically apart, still brings great comfort and sense of the community of God.
- Not being able to meet physically has highlighted how incarnational our faith is. When the churches were first closed I was taken aback by how distressed our local pub owner was. 'But the Church is the one thing we need now!' he said. It felt rather like a betrayal but we have supported him in other ways, not least by advertising his home delivery of ready cooked meals, and keeping in regular phone touch.
- I feel too isolated
- God is present in this virtual world and is definitely doing something over and beyond what we have achieved in church in recent years. But the physical interaction of fellowship is the missing link. I keep reminding myself of the scripture that says we must not stop meeting together. Well we are doing that but on a different way. It will be interesting if this time increases church attendance! God only knows!!
- Holding things together, but for many this is second best. I've had more time for Pastoral conversations and church meetings have been hugely reduced. During holy week much greater interest missionally, or from those on periphery (1000ish views on 2 min fb view thought for the day in holy week) too early to tell if interest will sustain but midweek thought this week had much lower viewing numbers
- I am struggling without my Church interaction
- Yes - a bit. My main reflection is that I can't wait to go back to normal because church is about people and nothing replaces meeting face to face. But we will upload more content generally because I'm aware that some non-church folks are tuning in and may continue to do so, and it will be a good way for people who are away or ill to stay in touch with our worship here
- An interesting way of being church, but has less of a family feel. Longing to get back to church most people are missing the Mass.
- Although the use of contemporary media does provide those familiar with it with access to teaching and a form of worship, I wonder whether the symbolic value of prayer taking place in locations where 'prayer has been valid', possibly marked by the ringing of the church bell is an unfortunate omission
- Very hard for those without internet or mobile technology at least 25%. They are being left out. No sure how the majority are finding the content I am putting up / sending around. In an isolated bubble. I see people on my daily walk around the village I live in. I have a further 6 villages which I have not visited.
- Yes, very much so. Even though we can't be together, there is still a strong sense of community and email and phone has contributed much to that. I'm picking up a yearning for a return to being able to worship together again and until that happens there is a bit of a sense of exile. Although we are in the Easter season, there is a sense too that we are still perhaps not quite there yet... a sense of being still at Holy Saturday
- To some extent. Apart from the obvious the-church-is-not-the-building stuff, I'm inclined to think there is something about presence and absence to reflect on: we usually think of that in terms of the perceived absence of God in dark times, or the sacrament of our presence when others are in need. In the current circumstances, we are the ones who are absent from each other and

from the church (people and building) while for many the only one who can be present is God. That reversal takes a bit of getting used to. Our people are so used to seeing us and each other, and finding reassurance in that seeing that the invisible God is also really present. It is quite difficult for some to adjust to the opposite reality. It requires an unmediated encounter with God which comes more easily to some traditions than others.

- Particular personal circumstances have meant that I have not had the time for personal reflection as I might have expected: I seem to be busier than ever. I have learned that receiving communion is not as important to me (or my congregations) as I thought it was. I have learned that being together is really important and there is no real substitute for being in a common physical space. I have discovered a love for my church buildings which I didn't know I had and a fondness for the people I can't be with. I have found that the Kubler-Ross pattern for bereavement also fits this as so many other things: denial, anger, depression, bargaining, resolution and not necessarily in that order. I think the "Oh, this is OK: we can do stuff on line and more people watch than come to church" is part of the denial: this isn't OK, it is evil and we need to call it what it is and stop pretending that it's all fine.
- hopefully isolation will not be too long as however good modern technology is we all seem to need the fellowship that we have when we gather in a church building
- Simply, we miss face to face contact!
- This is difficult St Andrews is an Anglo Catholic Parish with a sacramental focus.
- Plenty of personal reflection going on. I don't live in the Parish and am classed as one of the vulnerable. Because there is limited activity in our 3 churches - I feel disconnected. I tend to listen to radio services and watch televised services. Conclusions? Difficult to articulate those really.
- This is the only ministry I have known in this benefice - having been licensed on 16 March. We have all discovered how much we miss being physically together worshipping as the body of Christ - how important that is to us all - but also how much we can still feel a sense of that body over Zoom - but a very different feel. I feel this is probably the first time the benefice has felt truly united.
- Online services are still regarded as second best, but the best we can do at the moment. One to one Pastoral care by telephone and email is much appreciated and surprisingly effective. People want to and need to, talk.
- People are feeling connected but missing gathering in our beautiful church and singing together and the Communion
- That while technology enables us to share in the worship it doesn't allow us to participate in worship. There is a removed-ness from what is happening.
- My reflection is still a work in progress, my concern is for the many who do not feel comfortable using this medium and are feeling isolated. Even though there is contact it is not the same as meeting together. I would not want this to become a regular medium so people do not come to church. Physically meeting together, human contact and interaction is an important part of being human we need to rediscover this as soon as we are able.
- Early days. In this parish the rhythm of liturgical worship has become increasingly important. A shorter form of the Office is available through the website. As well as broadcasting a pre-recorded Eucharist we have just introduced a weekday Eucharist using Zoom. There is a telephone network using lay people as well as clergy for pastoral support. My conclusions are that I still struggle with not being able to gather the people of God/the Eucharistic assembly together physically, and experience the fullness of the sacramental life together

- Not being able to physically be with people is difficult, especially when, for instance, someone has a husband walk out on them and I cannot go and see them and give them a hug. We are relational beings and while we are able to see people via the internet, it is not the same as being with them physically. It has been good to take the focus off the church building and help people to see more clearly that the church is God's people and not a building, but it is not our natural way of doing things. Meeting together virtually is not the same as being together and there are inevitably glitches in technology at times, which can detract from the act of worship and being able to communicate effectively.
- Quite early on I remember thinking this all feels a little like the Israelites in Babylon - 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' and someone over Easter said to me that this feels like the 'Saint Mary Magdalene Easter "Do not touch Me"', and both speak to the times we find ourselves in. For the longest time I have had a plaque displayed in my study quoting Jeremiah 29:11 and have on one level, simplistically considered my path as God's plan for me. From a high vantage point on a bright clear day, we can typically see for miles, all the roads and paths with their many different directions laid out before us, plain and obvious. But the same spot in the middle of a sandstorm offers no such view, the roads and paths are still there, just hidden from sight. To be able to say 'I am where God calls me to be', is also about recognising that I am where I am, not just because I saw a clear and obvious path with my eyes, but also that when my eyes couldn't see, I simply moved in the direction of the Lord's voice that I heard in my heart, guided not by sight but by faith. I consider these current and unprecedented times a little like being in that sandstorm. I might have wondered off the main path and onto the fringes, I cannot see far ahead or exactly where I will be, but I can focus on the now and where I am, I can focus on being present.
- A couple of thoughts: 1. It is remarkable how much of the "mechanics" of church can be reproduced for remote participation, but also how much of a gap remains between that and our normal experience of worshipping together. 2. Those without internet access have become a second class community, largely invisible except through 1-to-1 phone calls. 3. Pastoral ministry has taken on greater importance, though still largely invisible because of confidentiality - especially for those who are not on the internet. In our case this is primarily seen through our Pastoral Links scheme which operates by link people phoning their link members, and through our confidential prayer chains.

THE EUCHARIST

The centrality of Holy Communion in Anglican worship makes the questions around Eucharistic practice particularly pressing. As above, some experience this as a deep loss, while others expressed this in terms of fasting from the Eucharist and priests standing in solidarity with their congregations and not receiving communion. Many struggle with the performative aspect of a Eucharist as part of a broadcast or live-streamed service, while others find technology brings us closer together than is possible in a church service.

- The church where I serve has been very committed to weekly communion. New members have 'bought' into this practice without really understanding what communion is really about ('it is something important that we 'do') Having a 'fast' from Holy communion is helping us to appreciate the 'gathering' (Hebrews 10:25) and I pray, will help us to better appreciate the power and beauty of the Sacraments when we are able to share them together in the future. Also, for a while, we have been talking about how we might better focus on the 167 hours outside church (Rom 12:1-2) but old habits die hard and while we want to look at the 167 hours -

the one hour a week in church has the most attention for our discipleship. We have much more to do, but this absence from our building is also helping us think about this. A book that we are looking at to help us in this is John Mark Comer - The Ruthless elimination of Hurry. Having more enforced desk time (even if some of it is phone calls and zoom meetings) has also helped create more reflective space for me - I am very distracted by activity. I am also amazed again by the power of rhythm of the rule of life - especially something like morning and evening prayer to help people feel together when apart (i.e. 167 during the week). I am being challenged through this experience to develop a higher priority in our structures (PCC reporting, meetings etc.) to reflect the priority of 167 hours rather than just the 1 hour in church. I appreciate that may sound a little contradictory - appreciating the one hour in church more as well as appreciating our need to serve, grow and pray in the 167 hours of the rest of our lives - but I think that the future key will be in organising the 1 hour to better equip (maybe through technology) the 167 hours of the week ... work in progress!

- I like Zoom because it feels like I watch people gather together as they would on a Sunday. The feedback has been that people appreciate being able to see and hear each other. It has a sense of still gathering together as the Body of Christ and it still feels like worship. I decided not do a Eucharist as it feels too set apart and being able to participate in something my congregation are denied. I miss the sacramental nature of my ministry but feel that it is being seen more explicitly and acted out in different ways.
- We're engaging with the needs of our community through practical service in different ways. How we worship and celebrate Holy Communion is something I want to continue to reflect on.
- Very important to have services on line to keep community together We've got a good way of phoning around people, esp. those on own - and they need some paper material to keep in touch, so we are posting out some Confusing to know what we are doing about HC - I have not had time to think much more theologically about it - but my initial reaction to the Bishops' instruction not to encourage people to break bread at home while they watch, is that this seems to conflict to basic Acts teaching! ie why not allow people to break bread to remember Jesus as they watch a communion taking place elsewhere? They are doing that more to enrich their own spiritual life, and not attempting to undermine the usual Sunday gatherings...?? (And were encouraged to do so in a Spring Harvest seminar this Monday!)
- What we do has value, and keeps people focused on worship every week! The sadness has been the lack of possible 'shared' communion. We would have loved that at Easter, and for other occasions!
- No. Just as busy as ever, but in new ways. With regard to online Eucharist, I still have reservations which I am working through.
- We are a very diverse team ranging from modern catholic to traditional to village worship services of the word. Working through how to embrace this diversity with one shared service each Sunday is not easy. What is the theology behind pre-recorded Eucharistic services? One person celebrating with others joining on zoom? If two people are physically present for a Eucharist is it just the priest who receives on behalf of the whole community? Just a few of the theological questions being reflected upon.
- We have had quite a lot of reflection around whether, or not to record communion services. As a clergy team we have decided not and there has been some debate around that. So I have been reflecting on what communion is and what it means to do, or not do, it remotely whilst also putting spiritual communion into the mix. So nothing too big then!
- We are a very diverse team ranging from modern catholic to traditional to village worship services of the word. Working through how to embrace this diversity with one shared service

each Sunday is not easy. What is the theology behind pre-recorded Eucharistic services. One person celebrating with others joining on zoom? If two people are physically present for a Eucharist is it just the priest who receives on behalf of the whole community? Just a few of the theological questions being reflected upon.

- We have had quite a lot of reflection around whether, or not to record communion services. As a clergy team we have decided not and there has been some debate around that. So I have been reflecting on what communion is and what it means to do, or not do, it remotely whilst also putting spiritual communion into the mix. So nothing too big then!

GOD IS STILL WITH US AND STILL AT WORK

Respondents were keen to acknowledge that God is not limited by the current crisis, indeed He may be more present and more at work in ways which we had not previously seen.

- In a time of isolation, suffering and need I feel the presence of God among us as we seek to stay connected and give service.
- God is still God, we are still Church, our ministry might be happening differently but there is still engagement with others
- That it's the Spirit of God that binds us, not by services, buildings or tradition and that together we are learning to be alone with God.
- That Jesus is faithful to his promise that he will build his church and that hell will not prevail against it
- I've been reflecting a great deal on Philippians 4:12-13, how in every circumstance we can do all things through Him who strengthens us
- I'm very mindful that the Lord is with me in all situations and having a short worship service on a Sunday is just perfect
- God is still with us.
- This is a very difficult question to respond to as this situation is so unusual. I don't quite know how to feel with being unable to do and be church as we are all used to - it's hard! However I do believe that God is with me in the small way I am trying to continue. I do feel inadequate sometimes when I hear of others streaming services etc. which is beyond my personal capability! Prayer is at the heart of every day just now especially.
- Livestreaming has been positive and many on the fringe are connecting, but it is a passive experience, and interactive daily prayer meetings and small groups offer more potential to build up Christians.

SERVING WITH JOY

For some, the practical needs which have arisen as a result of physical distancing and self-isolation have provided an opportunity to express Christ's love in new ways in the community, or to play a key role in partnerships alleviating some of the problems of isolation.

- As a witness I believe we are, if anything more powerful. The church has become a hub for caring and many of our members are involved as volunteers delivering medicines and food. People are reflecting a great deal on what it means to be human and people of faith are valued and respected. This crisis is leading many to think about their faith deeply and may bring many back to God.

- In [Our Local] town itself I have tightened our pastoral care through telephone networks. We are also increasingly engaged in social action/community support (e.g. being on the emergency response steering group).
- I have helped set up and run two Covid-19 Mutual Aid groups. This has allowed me to get to know and serve a great deal more people in the parishes. I have encouraged the church goers that they are the church not the buildings. The volunteers have been washing the feet of many people. We have been following the command to love one another in lots of practical ways. I have not only reflected in this but written an article that has gone out to every household in a Mutual Aid News Letter.
- Relationships are still key. Phone calls are the mainstay with lots taking place every day. The church family have responded well and are actively living out the "love one another" call of Jesus. We have sought to be actively involved in local village and community initiatives, so seeking opportunities to reach out and love our neighbours.
- Encouraging people to spiritual depth and practical action. Serving beyond the parish and working with other agencies and parish councils.
- This is very much ongoing. I felt from the beginning that being Anglican we were there to serve the whole parish, not just our congregation. Every time I take my permitted exercise with the dog around our village, talking to people (briefly and with social distance) and getting to know many others. I also work through our parish (not congregation) telephone lists daily and everyone has responded very favourably to this contact. My Reader colleague and I have now set up a rota, identifying those who need weekly, fortnightly and monthly catch-ups. We are reaching out on local social media. It reminds me of the times when the church would provide shelter for a whole community in disaster, such as flooding. Earlier in the year, we had floods, and I contacted the Parish Clerk so that we could co-ordinate offers of help for parishioners. Now we are doing that on-line and reaching many more people. I am trying to serve and care for my people as best I can, just being present to them in as many ways as possible, reminding them we are here to help, and to listen. Before lockdown I arranged meetings with local volunteers to develop a four village support group, with a single point of contact number, which was my neighbour. Through it we provide shopping, prescriptions, post, telephone support and in one case signposting/safeguarding and contact with a family in Sussex whose elderly mother was living locally with undiagnosed dementia, extremely anxious and confused, and not complying with lockdown restrictions. Sermons have focused on the Easter hope, why it's alright to have doubts and how trust can help sustain us in times of uncertainty. For myself, I am a bit restricted by underlying health conditions in that I cannot take funerals but can fulfil all other obligations. I have mild-moderate asthma and have had three bouts of pneumonia. I have considered my fear of catching the virus, not because I fear death, but I do fear dying of this particular disease. I'm re-reading *La Peste*, which is sobering - this was one of my A-level French texts, and of course now I read it in a very different light as a priest - what is the nature of sacrificial ministry, what level of risk should I undertake when living with another vulnerable person (over 70), is my isolation a form of cowardice? I did ask my training incumbent this, and was grateful for his reply - you are many things, but you are not a coward. I'm wondering what and how is church going forward. Our four rural parishes are variously resilient, some better placed than others to survive. I am thinking of how we will celebrate our churches being re-opened, of course, but also about how we can pull together financial recovery plans, and whether despite our efforts we may lose a church. I'm hopeful that we will continue to maintain a digital presence, from which may come growth and an alternative way of being church in a community if a building should close. But I am also conscious that I can only be a presence in the village where I live, so try to keep up as much contact as possible in the other three. My go-to

person for updating church notices in one parish is the daughter of someone whose funeral we prepared just before lockdown. She doesn't come to church but is very happy to help and support at this time, for example. One very important aspect for me is the nature of pastoral care in this new environment. I wrote a dissertation on the need for priestly engagement in pastoral care in 2018. I would very much like to reflect on the current situation and develop my argument further - and I wonder how you 'do' pastoral care in a digital church, when relationship is the foundation of pastoral ministry? So there is much to think about and process. My initial conclusions are that going digital has opened up access to a whole new sector; that personal relationships which reach out to meet people where they are may grow fruit (nothing new, but people are responding more proactively at present); that time spent in preparing good quality digital worship is well worth while; also that daily attention to the pastoral needs of communities is vital to our ministry; and that, whatever the challenges or doubts, we continue to trust in God's plan for us, and for our calling; that trying to replicate the busyness of a previous rota is a distraction and takes us away from what is most important - to use this time to draw closer to God in prayer and worship, to reflect and strengthen our ministries in preparation for whatever may come.

WITHDRAWAL AND WASTED OPPORTUNITY

The complete closure of churches, is seen by some as a withdrawal from our role as the national church providing spiritual resources through our physical presence in every community. These responses also explore the public perception of the church and question whether the reputational damage of closing churches will be a significant barrier to trust in the future.

- Yes. The church is stepping up well to the challenge of worshipping for the regular congregations. However, the church (corporately) is perceived as having stepped back in terms of its obligations to the wider community and in many cases has not provided a leadership role in this time of crisis.. Where we do seem to have appeared in the public life of our parishes, as reported in the press, it seems that we are relegated to novelty news items etc. rather than standing in solidarity with essential workers. At the present time the country is too busy to notice that the Church of England has gone missing but once this is all over we will have weakened our claim to be anything other than a Sunday Club for the faithful. I feel that our current stance will mean that in the future we will have lost our moral authority to make any meaningful contribution to our society other than seasonal platitudes. I know that clergy are in many cases providing local leadership with foodbanks and crisis response teams but are not confident that they have the support of the Church to do so and are therefore 'flying under the radar'. Of course, as clergy we are more than an extra sort of social worker but the church's focus is currently (or is perceived to be) too inward looking. It is telling that the guidance that we are receiving is focussed on worship provision and not on practical ways to serve our communities. The Trussell Trust has identified to me that this diocese has little to offer in its online presence in terms of practical help. Yes, absolutely we need to be praying for our parishes, providing solace and comfort for the bereaved, isolated etc. and being shepherds to our flock but at the same time we need the freedom to be seen to be 'there' for our parish, the needs of which varies dramatically according to context. The parish at large does not care if I take the Communion service on my own in the church or on my own in my study, but it does care if I absolve myself of any responsibility to make sure that they are fed, medicated, kept safe, their issues picked up and dealt with and they are reassured by people that they know and trust. It is a mistake to corporately take a step back - the government seems to class us as

essential workers as do our parishes, but surely our policy of retreating is allying us with those parts of society deemed non-essential. I am concerned that history will see this time as the point at which the Church of England decided, as a matter of policy, that we have nothing to contribute to the wider community other than our own ecclesiastical interests.

- Deep sadness and regret that the church buildings are closed. Those both those 'inside' and 'outside' the church do not understand why. Ministry over the phone is working well. Still doing services as usual but from home. Overwhelming sadness on a Sunday morning.
- No. This meets a minority of needs - most, despite encouragement are not wanting to participate, and are finding their support in traditional ways through family and neighbours.
- Though I love doing digital outreach I don't think it's that it's as significant as the Church's prophetic and servant role. My main reflection has been on the failure of the wider Church. Sorry but the wider Church has yet to be prophetic. It has not engaged with the change in worldview i.e. "we are not invincible.. Therefore we need a saviour". This should be our moment but instead we are following and not leading. I think we have also misunderstood the sacramental role of our sacred spaces to the wider public.
- I have struggled with churches being told to stop doing communion and then being shut so abruptly without much consultation. The current response of the Church of England to the current pandemic seems to me to be at total odds with what we are told to do in times of pandemic according to the rubric in the BCP's Communion of the Sick. "Forasmuch as all mortal men be subject to many sudden perils, diseases and sicknesses, and ever uncertain what time they shall depart out of this life; therefore, to the intent they may be always in a readiness to die, whensoever it shall please Almighty God to call them, the Curates shall diligently from time to time (but especially in the time of pestilence, or other infectious sickness) exhort their Parishioners to the often receiving of the holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ, when it shall be publicly administered in the Church; that so doing, they may, in case of sudden visitation, have the less cause to be disquieted for lack of the same" This seems to say that during times of widespread infectious disease and danger of sudden death, Communion is a means of reassuring and preparing people to face death. Whereas what we are being told to do is don't give communion because people might die. We seem to be so afraid of getting sick through taking communion because of a virus, when at the same time, we don't take as seriously the LORD's very clear warning that He will personally inflict sickness and even death on those who take communion when they are sinning against the "body" e.g. divisive, unforgiving, inconsiderate etc. towards other brothers and sisters in church.
- I have written a reflection for Low Sunday which was circulated with Parish information. I tried to link the scripture set for the day to the current crisis to try to see where God is in this situation/ Am currently reflecting on "a Pandemic of Disobedience" relating pestilence to distancing our culture from God or God's ways.
- I think it is all very personal at the moment. We do not seem to be reaching out to others.

VOCATION

The sudden change in circumstances has caused some people to look at their own calling and the vocation of others in a new light. New opportunities have arisen as old ways of doing things have closed down and this is a cause of reflection, anticipation as well as grief.

- Have spent a lot of time thinking about 'place' and 'calling' and coming to the conclusion that I am where God needs me to be in continuing to support people and support the wider community (via foodbank etc.)

- Yes, but only on my own. I think that it is an interesting change for the ministry of a Reader to be relying on the written rather than the spoken word but am enjoying the challenges. I see it very much as service of God and my neighbour and totally pastoral in nature. It has also allowed me to do so much more for my home church than normal as our worship is normally Eucharistic with the celebrant also preaching and I would be travelling elsewhere to lead Morning Prayer.
- Our pastoral care has been shared out among a team and that is working well. Members of the phone network are acting as 'shepherds' to their lists of people after the pattern the good shepherd. It is proving to be a really rewarding ministry for them during lockdown.
- My own ministry as reader has been by phone as I had a kidney transplant last year, trying to raise spirits and keep in touch with Facebook as well, as for my own self have a place within my garden where I have been exploring Celtic spirituality and praying and meditating on Hebrews.
- Personally I feel quite constrained. Being in the 70+ bracket I feel unable to do the normal visiting that I would do - including home communions and English conversation with the father of our Syrian family. On the plus side there is the challenge to be rather than to do. Early morning walks have given me material for Reflections for our website and some poetry (!) But it's a pretty restricted social/pastoral existence.
- There is a danger we are being forced to being more clerical with [Our Curate] and I dominating leading and speaking even though we are trying to draw other people in. We are reflecting on what leadership should look like at the moment. Also there are real challenges about what church is and how we do it. Also my concern is that churches across the diocese are feeding the faithful but not really connecting with those outside the church as much as we could and should. Fleeting engagements with services could be an indictment rather than encouragement, if people watch a minute and decide it's boring or irrelevant. Also numbers are up because loads of Christians are church surfing on Sundays. There is also a huge danger of consumerist church and low discipleship
- We have in some ways reverted back to minister led ministry where before we were involving more of the body of Christ in our worship. We are now looking to bring back wider involvement with [The Villages in our Benefice].
- I think the whole world needs to reset and think about how it is living and what its priorities have been and should be. For myself, I'm using the time to reset and reconnect with my sense of vocation, and try to be the best priest I can be. Also I'm using the time to catch up on lots of things and put better systems in place for when we are out of this crisis. And trying to look after my people as best I can. I've been doing a lot of reflecting and using resources for my own relationship with God which I think I had been neglecting. If I'm not being passionate about my faith, how can I teach others to be?

TIME (OR LACK OF IT) FOR REFLECTION AND ADAPTATION

This process of reflection is ongoing but, as with any sustained reflection on our praxis, needs dedicated time, prayer and conversation. Some respondents have found time for this in self-isolation, others are even busier now than before the lockdown.

- Not much time - the volume of emails has barraged me!
- Doing church differently has given all of us an opportunity to look at what it means to pray together when we are separated. Together in spirit.
- At the moment I think we're too busy trying to get up to speed on how things work!

- We have begun on this and I think would be better done outside of a questionnaire. The following are beginnings of some thoughts and reflections: 1) Participation in worship is not the same as being an audience. Social media naturally leverages an audience which isn't the same as a worshipping community. 2) What is the basic unit of the church? Small group, local church, mission community, diocese, national church. How do we see these operating and what are the ecclesiological implications? Although I'm sure not intentioned it has felt locally that the message from national church has been 'we are closed' and we have had to work very hard locally to articulate a message of hope that is heard by wider society. What Archbishops say is a much louder megaphone than what we say and do locally (including in the Diocese), just because of how it is reported. I hope there will be some reflection nationally about our communications strategy since although on the ground Christians are the bedrock of much local outreach the messaging that has been heard from the centre is that we have closed the doors and left the field which is concerning (albeit I know unintentional) 3) I'd like to spend time reflecting on what it means to be a parish church. The wider geographic engagement (as noted above) probably asks some tough questions of our normal assumptions regarding the parish system in some contexts whereas in other contexts it will reinforce a more traditional parish understanding. What does it mean to be a diocese and church with very varied understandings and expressions of parochial ministry that I think are not just different (we have always said that) but actually contradictory. 4) What builds disciples - large central gatherings (easier to be clergy controlled) or empowered smaller groups (lower degree of clergy control but arguably more early church). How do these needs correlate to our investment in training as a church, diocese and national institution? There is lots more!
- Not a great deal. The first week was spent trying to work out what was going on and understand technology. The next week was occupied with doing Holy Week and Easter. This week I've been trying to take it more easily! I think it's too early to jump to conclusions about what's going on - sometimes we simply need to live in the moment, for today has enough troubles of its own. I am convinced of the need to be realistic about what we are missing and have lost - and give space to process and mourn that. We also need to trust that God can bring good out of bad and reassure people that God is with them and in the end He wins. Maybe this is a time for deepening spirituality among Christians cut off from usual sources of support. I suspect in future we will do more online, but that people will also value physically meeting together more.
- Not fully. No conclusions yet. I can see some great uses for on line in future e.g. sermons or teaching from a central point for multi-centre parishes
- As a team plus wardens we are beginning this process. At the moment we believe we are being called to be more missional, to be encouragers but not spoon feeders to congregants. Personal discipleship is essential! When we return be aware of need to not throw 'baby out with bath water', but yet be ready to not go back to normal. A chance to reset and rethink what we are doing - what is the Gospel imperative and how does that contextualise for us in Tiverton. We are also concerned about how we stay connected or continue discipleship with people where we only have an online connection....no answers here yet
- Have not been able to reflect theologically yet, listening to Tim Keller series on Habakkuk "Rejoicing in tribulation". As a Reader my role is "Church in the work Place" and as my wife and I are still working that ministry has not changed, just the questions people are asking.
- Sadly little head space at the moment. What I do want to do is take time later and consider carefully how we 'unlock'. We simply must not go back to the same old rota. What can we do differently, pray deeply, what is God showing us?
- I have reflected yes but too soon to draw conclusions.

- I have certainly been reflecting on ministry in these challenging times - and on courage and mortality, too. I'm not sure I'm ready yet to share my thoughts - and I certainly haven't reached any conclusions.
- Reflection is ongoing, however there is an emerging need to stream services regularly, something not presently undertaken.
- I think that it's broadened to my theological thinking while attracting people from different traditions and spirituality has been a good experience
- Not currently on a hamster wheel
- Apart from the burst of vivid activity when producing material - this is a peaceful time. It has reinforced my conviction that simple informal services are where my heart lies.
- Within the limits of what we are being allowed to do, and with no further guidance, the feeling is that we are adapting well. All things will evolve.
- A bit...no firm conclusions
- There is more time to spend being creative and reflect on inclusivity and what that will mean when the lockdown ceases. What has kept others away from services? Is God calling us into another or renewed way of being church?
- Not yet. I work full time (I'm a Reader) and that is quite pressured at the moment plus members of my family have had the virus and I've had to act as carer while working. So I'm still waiting for all this free time that everyone talks about to materialise! We are continuing with a home group via Zoom but attendance is well down. We are responding as best we can using the resources we have and trying to explore new ways of worship within limited means.
- Not yet - intend doing this as a leadership team when able to do so.
- Adapting to the new routine has been forefront. That adaptation is mainly through internet and phone calls.
- Some (discussion!) on YouTube confession/absolution and blessing as opposed to the same via Zoom at Deanery Chapter today. Perhaps we need an appropriate liturgy for YouTube! I was hoping to spend more time praying, reading and reflecting; more time phoning my folk but spend a lot of time in Zoom meetings and preparing for Sunday Services.
- Just rolling with the punches at the minute!
- Yes. I need a bit more time to write about this but I will. My spiritual director is very helpful.
- No conclusions yet, but questions about how to learn from this are being asked.
- Some of us in the chapter are sharing some thoughts by email though I haven't yet contributed much to this. I did watch the 'Rumours of Hope' Easter vigil (over a few days) and found that encouraging and challenging and want to revisit some of that material to reflect more deeply for myself.
- This process is slow in coming: still avalanched by stuff/prep/family matters/pastoral issues arising. However, I belong to The Bright Field Community so will be doing quite a bit of that by zoom tomorrow.
- I am deeply engaged in prayer and reflection but it is too early to articulate this
- Reflecting weekly with the Rector as we explore new ways of connecting with our congregations and those who don't ordinarily attend church. !
- I think this is a time to reset - re imagining a different future. We are travelling along unknown ways.
- Constant reflection. Top down decisions and decrees are not helpful, nourishing or Christ like.
- God is still challenging those with power (or tech) to love and help those without. Confidence and vision needed which requires healing and help. Same ministry, new media. Our biggest threat is that giving is no longer a faithful duty but an occasional gift. Buildings cannot be insured

and maintained without big fundraising which competes with prayer and ministry: Give money, competes with give prayer.

- We are being church through our prayer life, and the way in which we are serving and supporting those inside and outside our congregations. We are welcoming others in to our services who have little or no regular church connection with us. I'm finding it interesting to have a ministry of prayer, and the time to pray and reflect more deeply - to hold the situation before God. I think there is an even greater sense of support and community between members of the congregation than I witness in 'ordinary' times - much more concern for one another. I, personally, feel myself to be more rooted in God than ever - partly because I have the time to pray and reflect - and as a result I feel more of a priest than a headless chicken for once!