

## Dear Friend



Hello again from your friends in Deepest Dorset. This Sunday I'm writing with music, another 'virtual walk', and a poem hot off the press. But first, I think we're realising that for many of us mental and emotional wellbeing is almost as much of an issue as the virus.

### In Troubled Times

Among the most helpful tools for mental health can be the practices of mindfulness. We're very fortunate here to have two regular teachers working in this field, **Sue Howse** from nearby Burton Bradstock and **Tim Stead** who's based in Oxford. Both work from a basis of Christian spirituality, but in a very inclusive way that welcomes all and draws on many other traditions.

Another time I may bring you something from Sue. But for today, Tim has gathered on his website a rich collection of resources specifically to support mindfulness "in troubled times". You can find it [here](#).

### Come Walk With Me 2

Yes, I was out this morning visiting parts of our grounds you may not know so well... and a new building. So grab some virtual sunglasses and let's go amble!

The newsletter picture is of blackthorn blossom, by the way, just past its best. As April days lengthen it concedes pride of place to that other white-robed messenger of spring, the hawthorn. [Here's the video](#).

## Othona Psalms

The Psalms are ancient hebrew songs/poems. Down the ages they have spoken to - and for - countless people, especially in difficult circumstances. For many of us now they are probably hidden under metaphorical cobwebs. But since the 1970s Othona has had the resource of contemporary versions of many psalms - words and music composed specially for us by the then warden at Othona Bradwell, Colin Hodgetts.

Back in 2017 a few of us gathered in the chapel here in Dorset and worked with Colin to make recordings of his latest revised psalms - as well as other songs based on Christian and other scriptures. Here are three contrasting examples you could listen to.

[Song of Humility](#) (psalm 131) balances the traditional male God-imagery with a baby at the breast. [Song of the Universe](#) (psalm 19) gives a cosmic perspective and a mediterranean folkdance vibe. [Buddhist Blessings](#) is just what it says!

If you'd like to hear more, visit [Colin's youtube channel](#) and there's a Music section on [his website](#).

## Fourteen Lines

Finally, in an earlier newsletter I shared a sonnet by Nigel Thomas. Well, here's one from me.

I was prompted to write it yesterday by thoughts of grief and poetry. (I'd been asked to suggest suitable poems for one of our Othona friends to read at the funeral of her father who has succumbed to Covid-19. Lynne, our sympathies are with you.)

The primrose clumps are social-distancing,  
Each gives its neighbour room to grow and thrive  
And all along the path I'm daily walking  
Buds unfurling signal "we're alive!"  
In meadows sloping to deserted beaches  
While skylarks drench the listener with song  
Orchids' first leaves are manifesting; each is  
A promise that the warm days can't be long.  
But this year, eyes that would have loved such treasures  
Are closing with none near to say farewell.  
Despite all lockdowns, shielding, special measures,  
A nano-organism has brought hell.  
May we survivors of such suffering  
Recall tenderly those whose Fall came in Spring.

Tony - on behalf of all of us isolating at Othona: Robin, Liz, Kate, Gavin and Sean