

Dear Friend



Today's photo shows a spiral of tealight holders in chapel. It gives any of us somewhere to light a candle when there's a person or situation on our heart. A double helix - the DNA - of prayer, you might say.

Will you Zoom in today?

May I remind you that we are live on Zoom in the Othona chapel from 4.30 this afternoon (Sunday 3 May) with a **One World Worship** beginning at 5.00. Will you join us? There'll be prayers and reflections, simple songs (you can join in at home) and a welcome for all. You may like to have a candle ready to light at home during the worship.

Up to 100 people at a time can join us on Zoom. From 4.30 to 5.00 Robin will be here online to help if you're struggling with connection problems. (Can you hear me? Why can't I see you? etc.)

So any time after 4.30 [click here to join Zoom Meeting](#) In case your computer asks you for it, the Meeting ID is: **826 3414 4764** There is no password needed.

We plan to record this service, so it may be possible to watch later. And after it ends we'll stay online for a while with a cup of tea, so why not join us for a chat!

Words in Advance

Do you know this brief verse by poet Lemn Sissay?

"How do you do it?" said Night
"How do you wake and shine?"
"I keep it simple," said Light
"one day at a time."

We'll be singing that this afternoon. By way of contrast, we'll use as a reading this poem by RS Thomas (1913-2000). Thank you reader **Mike Oates** for drawing it to my attention. (How many short poems draw on Elijah, Orpheus and Euridice, and the Sistine Chapel, but without seeming scholarly?)

Thomas, a great poet, was also something of a recluse. He was a Christian priest who experienced God more as absence than as presence. As Mike says "surely a man who could stare out of his cottage door in the Llyn Peninsula and hold the gaze of all the confusion and anxiety we are experiencing. His gift was to put that encounter into words."

Threshold

I emerge from the mind's
cave into the worse darkness
outside, where things pass and
the Lord is in none of them.

I have heard the still, small voice
and it was that of the bacteria
demolishing my cosmos. I
have lingered too long on

this threshold, but where can I go?
To look back is to lose the soul
I was leading upwards towards
the light, To look forward? Ah,

what balance is needed at
the edges of such an abyss.
I am alone on the surface
of a turning planet. What

to do but, like Michelangelo's
Adam, put my hand
out into unknown space
hoping for the reciprocating touch?

RS Thomas couldn't have imagined our situation today. But how 'of the moment' this seems (yes, I know viruses aren't bacteria). And how poignant the hope for "reciprocating touch" has become!

Music Against Fear

Fear and religion have a problematic history. In so many cultures from early times people learnt that God or the Gods were to be feared. (The reasons, with hindsight, were complex - some understandable, some disreputable.)

But healthy spirituality never encourages fear. And evolved religion looks to nurture love, not fear. Jesus urged people again and again: "Don't be afraid".

Nevertheless, how many of us can say we *never* fear? In current circumstances proper precautions can easily mutate into fearfulness. So here are two contemporary songs/chants that may help at moments when that old F-word is rising within us.

["Do Not Be Afraid"](#) has a haunting melody and some lovely instrumental playing too.

Thank you reader **Judy Why** for tipping me off about [Wester Caputh](#), performed here by 11 singers and a very unafraid babe-in-arms!

Come Walk With Me 5

I've recorded moments from another Dorset walk. Today's route is quintessential Othona - from our lawn down to the beach.

(I have to apologise in advance for the noisy effects of a stiff breeze on the microphone. I'll have to get one with some wind protection.) So for skylarks and seakale, my friends, [step this way](#).

Changing the Rhythm

Finally, I'm going to change the frequency of these newsletters. I enjoy putting them together and it's great getting feedback from many of you. (The analytics tell me some 800 people are opening each edition.)

Twice a week seemed right as we all faced the initial shock of lockdown. But I think it's time to adjust that. From now on I'll be aiming to send you one newsletter - each weekend.

I do hope they'll continue to be of interest. Some of you tell me you pass them on to friends; those folk could also sign up [here](#) to receive our news directly.

And do go on sending me ideas of what I could include.

Until the next time, we wish you every blessing to be found 'in spite of it all' in the diminished circle and the changed pace

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