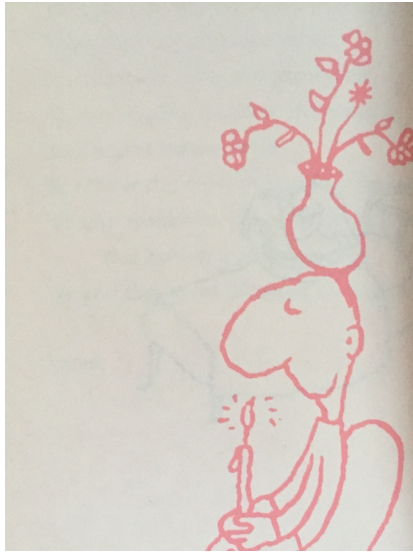


## Dear Friend



Hello again from an Othona with sun glinting off the sea, goldfinches doing pick-and-mix on the lawn and the youngest palest leaves starting to unfurl on the sycamores.

We'd love you to see these things with us. But sadly we and our committee have just agreed **all events here are cancelled up to 28th June**. We'll keep it all under review as the national picture evolves. Later this week we'll be contacting everyone who'd booked, sorting out their refunds.

### Simplify our lives?

Having brought you that news, today I'm delighted to step back and hand most of this newsletter to others. Our picture here is by the veteran Australian cartoonist, poet and (sometimes controversial) cultural/spiritual commentator, **Michael Leunig**. We often use Leunig's illustrated prayer/poems in chapel.

**Liz Howlett** was a regular visitor here over 27 years (with sons Andy and Chris and/or friend Julia) until last April when she moved from Birmingham to join us as an invaluable member of the resident core community.

She handles bookings and other office work in particular. She's also about to be licensed as an associate priest, helping out in our local parishes. [Today's first sharing](#) is Liz reflecting on what Leunig wrote to accompany the guy with the candle and flowerpot.

### From the e-postbag

Now for some of *your* ideas. Thank you **Gillian Dean** for this short quotation from the late Michael Mayne's book, 'Learning to Dance':

When the darkness engulfs us, none of us knows how we shall respond... Yet I have learned many times that suffering, when permeated by love, can have creative power.

There is an anonymous first century saying: "When I light a candle at midnight, I say to the darkness *I beg to differ.*"

**Monica Castenetto** left the UK and got back home to Switzerland just in time to self-isolate with her elderly and disabled mother. She's writing some really vivid thoughtful blogs you may enjoy reading.

Here are links to three of them. You'll find you can subscribe (with or without making a comment) to receive others as and when she posts again.

[Just Sitting - Notes from Self-Isolation](#)

[Expansion of a Different Kind - Notes from Self-Isolation](#)

[Everyday stories, up and down](#)

Of the various poems you've been kind enough to send, today I'm going to share [Pandemic](#) suggested by **Trish Marsh**.

### **Keep 'em coming**

Thank you to everybody who's sending me possible contributions to these newsletters - poems, prayers, jokes, personal reflections, blog links, pictures, All are welcome. I know you'll understand I can't use all of them and not take it personally if yours isn't featured!

It strikes me, by the way, that almost everyone who's written seems to be at home most or all of the time. But there are Othona friends on or near the front line. If you have a moment - when you do - please let's hear from some of *you* too. What's it like for you now? What's your 'community' experience, for better or worse, when you're out and about? How can the rest of us support you?

### **The non-digital community**

Let me mention that we've not forgotten the Othona folk who don't have email. Last week Liz put together a digest of some newsletter material which she posted to people on our mailing list for whom we have no email contact. It's been good hearing back from a number of them by phone or letter. **Marjorie Barton**, for instance, wrote from Harwich:

"It was so nice to be reminded that I am not alone, and that there are many more people like me who live alone, and forget all the friends who do think about them. Seedtime and Harvest bring us even closer, all the miles apart, yet we know we are doing the same things at the same time, very comforting." We'll do another postal newsletter each month of the virus.

### **Our animals and other family**

Finally, some news of pets ("Ahem, Companion Animals, if you please"). Otto the Elusive (Robin's and my black and white monster) is loving his new thyroid

medication... because we can only serve it to him wrapped in meat paté! Over in the Lodge, Catkin, a smaller black-and-white rescue puss, has been getting braver and enjoying the company of yet a third feline, Tibby an energetic all-black 11 month old who is never far from his human ~~master~~ servant Gavin.

Which leads me to a human roll call. Apart from cats, our community hunkered down together against the virus consists of Liz, Kate (housekeeper), Gavin (volunteer, Kate's partner), Sean (handyman volunteer), Robin (website and communications) and me (her husband).

We all send you a friendly wave (or a contented purr) from the Jurassic Coast

Tony