

Dear Friend



A Happy Easter to you, wherever you are, alone or with your household, marking this day as a Christian, an 'undecided', or from another faith perspective. Even among those who call ourselves Christians there are many ways of understanding the Easter story.

This year of all years we can't avoid the fact - surely obvious to people in less 'insulated' societies today or in the past - that death and loss have to be faced if 'life in all its fullness' is to be more than wishful thinking. Or in the words of Richard Rohr (whose daily meditations from <https://cac.org/sign-up/> I strongly recommend):

"I believe the Christian faith is saying that *the* pattern of transformation is always *death transformed, not death avoided*. The universal spiritual pattern is death *and* resurrection, or loss *and* renewal, if you prefer. That is always a disappointment to humans, because we want one without the other - transformation without cost or surrender."

A tree of life

In the chapel here for the last few months - up at 'the business end' - we've had a large bare branch, stood upright as if it were a tree. It was cut and brought indoors at the end of November to serve as a [Jesse Tree](#) (an old Advent tradition). Then it became our Christmas tree, til the last decorations were taken off at Candlemas (Feb 2nd).

But we noticed this branch - although deprived of any water - still insisted on budding. Small downy buds (we believe it's a willow). So we have held on to our Spring-fixated mini-tree and it lives to fight another day, another festival.

Today it went outdoors for our painted papier-mâché eggs to be hung on, as you see in the photo. Behind it is a cross with 'prayer clooties'. We six in our household celebrated Easter together with everything from saxophone improvisation to gospel reading, from qigong exercises to shared bread and Othona apple juice, from Tess Ward's prayers composed for coronavirus times to songs that "love is come again".

Wider communities

I hope you'll understand if I keep this newsletter quite short, so as to spend more of today in the company I'm so blessed (I know!) to be able to enjoy. It may seem a small thing if you are struggling with isolation, but we've been calling our wider community to mind, giving thanks for that connection, knowing if we pray you may be praying with us, and if we laugh or cry likewise.

Othona sits also in the wider community of West Dorset. A week ago today our colleague Liz was licensed as an associate priest in our local churches. All done by Zoom, with bishop, rector and Liz herself in different places. A first in Salisbury diocese. For technical reasons we couldn't live stream the ceremony. But it is available now on youtube.

Don't be put off that it's a few seconds before the video image becomes visible. Click [here](#) to view. We value Liz's ministry among us - as we all minister to each other, of course - but especially we know she'll bring her skills and sensitivity to the parishes of the Bride Valley.

Initial Composition

Last time came the idea of writing something where the main words start with one of your own initials. Many people reading this will know Ali Tebbs: Othona member since her teens, core member here in the 1970s, Bridport resident, sometime trustee and still a member of our management committee, mother and grandmother of other Othonans! Her initials led her to this eloquence:

Actually, although this time is awful
All of us are trying.
Typing this and thinking up all the things I am thankful for
gives an awesome tally of advantages.
In the aftermath, may the ache for those lost
and the teachings taken from this trying time
augment our affections and attach us to what is true.

I can't improve on that to close this ninth 'in spite of virus' newsletter

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

