

The Dean writes:

A few weeks ago, I preached a sermon on Sabbath - the commandment to keep one period of 24 hours each week free from work and free for time with family and recreation. At that point I didn't quite realise how quickly we would find ourselves as a culture keeping an enforced "sabbath".

And just as the biblical sabbath sometimes feels like a burden as much as an opportunity and a gift, so with this unexpected sabbath, which will last a great deal longer.

It is important that we recognise our common anxieties and fears, our unease with restriction on our freedom, our worship together, and the fabric of much of our society and culture. But I still want to talk about sabbath. That means focussing on what we use this time FOR, rather than what we simply can no longer do.

And let me be personally honest. I thought that having this unexpected free time might feel like a continuation of my study leave. But it doesn't. I am aware that I am already having to dig deep into my own resources, to establish new patterns and disciplines for the long term, think more carefully than ever about how I use my time. This is challenging.

My conviction - despite the challenges - is that if we can embrace the possibilities of this unexpected wide space of time, we may find it to be a genuine sabbath where we can learn rest and recreation in a new way, and continue on an every deepening journey with God.

So, what can we do? Each of us need to make choices. Rhythms are definitely important, finding ways to structure our days with both routine and variety. I would strongly suggest that spiritual practice is an essential ingredient in this. That's why we are putting a variety of material on the "Church at Home" section of the website. We have had a few hiccups with live streaming the daily prayer, but that that is now firmly available daily at 7.45 am and 5.15 pm via FaceBook. We are seeking ways to make that available in other ways too. There is also a very simple form of sung Night Prayer (Compline) available from the website.

There is fascinating evidence that people who live alone but who practice a regular spiritual discipline, like daily prayer and meditation, feel much more deeply connected with others. That is a great invitation to all of us to establish simple, durable patterns of prayer that build community as we open up to God.

And if you have suggestions about how we could offer more, then let us know.

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Coronavirus is a massive challenge to a great deal of what we are used to. But if we can begin to construct it not simply as a threat but as a serious opportunity to look in a fresh way at our lives and our priorities, a time to go deeper in our relationships with God and one another, then it can also become a gift, a real Sabbath to the Lord.

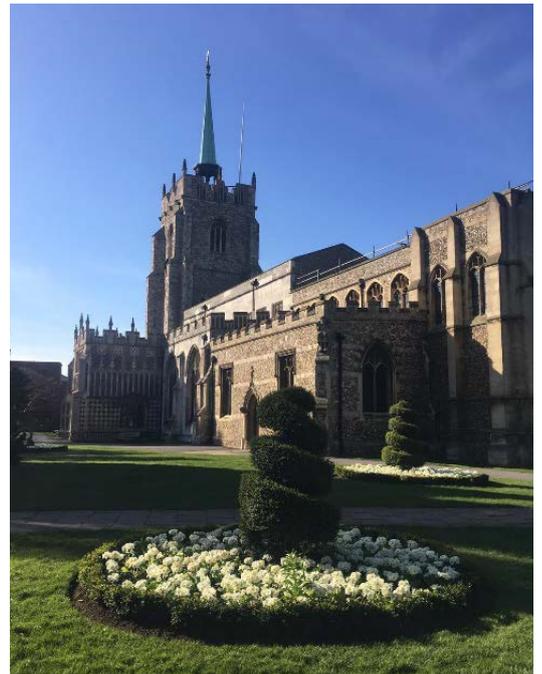
I want to leave the last word to a poem that David Frampton has just shared with me. I wish it was called Sabbath, as that is its theme, but I will abide by the author's choice.

Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath -
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Centre down.
And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful
(you could hardly deny it now).
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has become clear).
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love -
for better or for worse
in sickness and in health
so long as we all shall live.



Lynn Ungar 11/3/2020



Pray with Us:

Father, help us to be like Christ your Son, who loved the world and died for our salvation. Inspire us by his love, and guide us by his example. Amen.

St Mary with St Leonard, Broomfield

For the Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean, The Most Revd James Richard Wong Yin Song, Archbishop

For those who are unwell: Ernie Andrews, Jean Cooper, Teresa Hipgrave, Rita James, Alan Ketley, Norman Sharpe, Winnie Towers and all those in need of our prayers

A challenge from Jean, our Families and Children's Minister:

Awesome, Beautiful, Creator God - Here's a home worship activity which could last for the whole week if you wanted it too, or for ten minutes or so on a specific day if you'd rather. As a family (or on your own) see if you can think of a word to describe God beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Some letters are easy and you will think of several. Others are more challenging! If you want to develop the activity, write each one on a post-it note and add to the selection throughout the week. You may want to choose one of the words each day to discuss and reflect on together or to use as a focus for prayer.



Study with Us:

Study Notes on the Sunday Gospel:

Ezekiel 37.1-14
Ps 130
John 11.1-45

With the Lord there is Mercy and Redemption

Although our liturgy brings us nearer this week to the climax of Passiontide, our readings are full of hope and life.

In our **First Reading**, the people of Israel are exiled in Babylon. The prophet tells them that God will put a new spirit in them and raise them from their graves.

The **Psalm** is a prayer of trust in God, who is full of mercy and compassion. He will redeem Israel.

The **Gospel** unites all these themes of mercy and trust, of death and life, of redemption and resurrection, in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This great sign of Jesus being 'the resurrection and the life' leads us into the coming weeks.

As we contemplate these readings this week, may we draw closer to our Lord and accompany him as he sets his face towards Jerusalem.

Daily Gospel Readings for this week, to use in your daily prayer:

Monday: John 8. 1-11

Tuesday: John 8. 21-30

Wednesday: John 8. 31-42

Thursday: John 8. 51 - end

Friday: John 10. 31 - end

Saturday: John 11.45 - end





Last Sunday, we were encouraged to light a candle and place it in our windows at 7pm as a visible symbol of the light of light that is Jesus Christ as we joined together in prayer for each other and ourselves. Thank you to all those who emailed their photos. It was a really positive start to my working from home week.



Canon Imogen Nay is sending out a new weekly email, **Growing in Faith**, with resources to help us pray and study at home. If you would like to sign up for it, you can scroll down to the bottom of the Church at Home page of the website and sign up. Alternatively, please just email Imogen on imogen.nay@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk

Imogen is also posting the Study Material for her Wednesday Lent Group on her blog: <https://revnay.blogspot.com/> and this will continue past Lent into Easter.

The Cathedral is now completely closed, and all staff are working from home. Therefore, the best way to contact staff is via email if possible. If you are not on email and would like a call from a member of clergy, please contact Marion Palmer tel: 01245 294497.

The 'Church at Home' page of the website is updated daily with new information, prayers and reflections. Starting this Sunday, the 'Stations of the Cross' a daily reflection that was planned for the Cathedral, will be on the website with a new photo and reading each day until Easter.