

Dear Church family,

How are you all doing I wonder? I am at the start of my Easter holiday. Until Friday I was working on a rota at school. During week 1 I was at school every day to unlock the building for the key worker children and several days I was there all day with small numbers of children. Week 2 was similar although my Head teacher came out of isolation and so could cover some of the days instead me. Three children from my class have been in school for some days so I still had to keep in contact with the rest via email. It has been a privilege to go into school as I am not considered to be in the 'at risk' group like lots of my colleagues.

Jim has continued at foodbank - the first week he was working long hours as many of the volunteers are over 70 and so he was covering the warehouse (where the food comes in) and some of the distribution centres (where they give out the food - these are often church halls/centres). However, they have processed some volunteer applications quickly and now there are more people involved including our Ralph - praise the Lord!

So what I am learning in all this:

1) That God is in control and that He has a plan - for example, over Christmas the foodbank was bursting with food and storage space was becoming an issue - it was a great problem to have. Now we are beginning to understand that it was all part of God's plan and provision. Incidentally, there is a Methodist church couple who live down Mill Close, who are collecting for Hinckley Foodbank - there is a tub outside their house which they take in at night. You can leave items there. Jim has been to collect items from them to take to the warehouse - what a blessing!

2) That I cannot be all things to all people - In my fantasy land (some of you will remember Walter Mitty) I can speak to every one of my contacts on my frontline and I can do this frequently - church, my family, school - both staff and children/parents, healing rooms, friends etc. So yesterday I answered some emails from parents of Special Needs children at school, text a few colleagues to touch base with them especially if they live alone or are single parents and I managed a feeble number of phone calls to church family (2). So I need to let go and let God! He is the only one who can be all things to all people at this time or any other time.

3) The power of prayer - I have a strong faith in the power of prayer - I believe that He answers our prayers. *Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* (Luke 11:9-13) I acknowledge that His timing is perfect - it is very easy to pay lip service to this and to declare that His timing is perfect but at times it is much harder to cling on to this belief. Yesterday I did manage my

daily telephone call with my mum - this happens every day at 6.45pm but our topics of conversation are a little limited at the moment. We often talk about Daisy the dog (that her coat needs trimming, what a loyal companion she is etc) and I often listen whilst my mum talks about Jean, a friend from church. Mum and I always pray together over the phone although this only started after my Dad died. I got to thinking that I have prayed with so many people over the years (mostly church family or people who come to healing rooms) but not with my mum. One day I decided to be brave and say 'Let me say a prayer for you' and it grew from there. What started as me saying a prayer has changed into us praying together every evening as part of our phone call.

If you have not yet said a prayer with anyone over the phone, I would like to encourage you to make that offer. One way to start is to say 'I'll remember you in my prayers' and then when you feel ready you can try to move to the 'Let me say a prayer for you now'. And what words do I use? Well really I just try to think aloud using some of the concerns or thoughts that the person has shared with me - so it might go like this:

Father God, thank you for modern communications and for phones. Thank you for Jo - Father, you know that she is worried about Please come and fill her with your peace. Amen.

Finally, my lovely church family, please know that although I might not get around to ringing you to chat, you are still in my thoughts and much more importantly, know that God is watching over you, thinking about you, loving you and that you are precious in His sight.

With much love at this time,
Jill Matthews

Guidelines: With my Pastoral Assistant hat on, I have to ask us all to be mindful of vulnerable adults – yes we need to support each other and to be loving to each other whilst trying to discourage anyone from developing a personal dependence on us – we need to depend on God and know that He is the ultimate provider (Jehovah Jireh).

In church we discourage people from praying alone for a member of the opposite gender who is not related to them. In terms of developing a *regular prayer partnership* with another person who is not related to us, we are always advised to keep to same gender pairs (women praying with women, men praying with men). These guidelines are to keep us all safe and not to discourage us bringing prayer into our conversations.

I found this prayer useful- it was written by Cameron Bellm and tweeted by Canon J.John

Prayer for a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced

Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors

Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home

Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close

Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips

Remember those that have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market

Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home

Remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, Let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other,

Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours.

Amen