

120 Buy a virtual dog!

Yesterday, my friend, Jane sent a lovely encouraging email to a load of her friends saying that we should “get singing”, and sending a YouTube clip of her current favourite worship song, and saying:

These are challenging times for all of us... but these things are sure...

God is still God!

God is still **good**!

God doesn't inflict corona virus on us...

God will turn what is meant to harm us into something good!

Definitely! If we believe in a God whose main purpose is to restore, renew, redeem, then our job as people of faith is to be encouragers, like Jane. So let's all pray to God for ideas as to how we can encourage other people.

Some key workers, such as health workers, are going to be working themselves to a standstill, so maybe there's something we can do to help and support them.

And many people, especially older folks and those with health issues, may be stuck at home, lonely and with not much to occupy them – not a good combination. How can we help them?

Many of us, though, will have time on our hands, and aren't confined to base (I'm only **just** over 69), so I was thinking this morning of what I/we could do to encourage others.

I mean, obviously, we can offer to do shopping for people, give extra food to the FoodBank, and why not follow Jane's idea of sending friends a worship song?

But one idea I've just had is to buy a virtual dog (they cost virtually nothing!). Dogs, of course, need taking out for walks, at least once a day, maybe twice. And when I (well, we, if Sue's willing to follow my bonkers idea) take Fido out for his walk, I'm going to smile and say hello to everyone I meet, maybe ask them, “Are you OK?” and be willing to stop and chat (keeping my distance). And I'll pray to be given something positive to say, rather than falling into the trap of moaning about “the awful situation”.

And how do we follow the writer of Hebrews (below), given that even church services have been cancelled? Well, what about using Zoom? The weekly lunchtime prayer group that I started in my tiny attic office in Upper King Street, Norwich in 1984 is still going (though someone else has kept it running since I went off in the wilderness), and we're going to try praying by Zoom today.

If you love God and you know that God loves you then your smile can lift someone else – something I discovered big-time on my solo cycle ride in 2015. A quote from (I think) Ignatius has stayed with me: “You are a link in a chain, a bond of connection between people.” You don't know how a smile and a kind word can just lift someone's spirits at a time they need it.

Bless you all!

Paul Bev. 20.3.20

Heb 10:19 **Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence** to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴**And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another**—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.