



DIOCESE OF **Bath & Wells**

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Diocesan Healing Advisory Group Newsletter - Winter 2021

Dear Friends,

To state the very obvious, this last year has presented challenges to everyone. Some have to be braver than they knew they could, or live their lives on an impossibly tight budget, whether it's financial or relates to time, with the challenge of living around work and home schooling. And some have faced being alone and too much time on their hands. And now we are in the middle of what feels like 'more of the same.'

Last year we were told to prioritise our own health, especially as it affects people we love, and people who care for us professionally because of the pandemic. Many are finding this 'lock-down' more difficult, often because they have been lonely and isolated, sometimes almost unnoticed.

This Healing Newsletter hopes to keep us focused on healing ministries, and to give us some ideas about how we can all make a difference to others in these strange times, and the importance of looking after ourselves.

It has been said that we are not all in the same boat with the pandemic, but we are most certainly in the same ocean. Health and healing are to be found in enabling our communities to function as well as helping individual minds and bodies, so that we all know and value our unique place and role within the Kingdom of God.

With love and prayers as ever,
Gilly Bunce
Healing Advisor, Diocesan Healing Advisory Group

Healing Forums

Through 2021 the Diocesan Healing Advisory Group will be offering four opportunities for people to come together, reflect on the times we are living in and explore where healing is, can be and has been at work.

The first session, **Healing in a World Turned Upside Down**, will be on Zoom the evening of Tuesday, 9th February from 7:30 – 9:00pm. This session will explore the reasons behind the way we are feeling in this increasingly strange world and give us a chance to pray and reflect together as well.

The second session, **Healing in a Time of Transition**, will be in April 2021 and will help us to think about the future, what are we learning during these times, and what do we need to continue with our healing ministries.

The third session will reconsider what brought us to/why we are involved in healing ministries. And for the final session we plan to hold a Healing service in the Cathedral in the autumn, hopefully gathering in person – or online – as pandemic restrictions allow.

To register for the first session on 9th February, please visit the [event page](#).

A listening ear

[Premier Lifeline](#), the National Christian Helpline, offers a listening ear, someone to talk to, emotional and spiritual support, prayer, and signposting. They are open 9:00am to midnight every day on 0300 111 0101.

Demand for a listening ear has been particularly high over the last year and so two new schemes - **Call5** and **Call and Care** - have been created to supplement the helpline and to address some of the isolation and loneliness and rise in people experiencing mental health issues experienced across the country.

Call5 - This campaign encourages individuals to identify people who they know who would welcome a telephone call, a friendly voice and someone to talk to during this challenging time. Just that sense of company is so important to someone who is feeling isolated. It really helps to feel remembered. We are asked to choose 5 people - friends, family, neighbours, and other contacts - and to commit to call them over the winter to ensure they know someone is there for them. Although this is primarily a telephone-based project, it also includes contact through Skype, FaceTime, text, email or whatever the preferred contact method is for the people involved.

Why “Call5”? We have five digits on each hand - looking at our hands is an easy reminder to call, by allocating a person to each digit. For the enthusiastic, there is always a second hand to use to identify five more people to call.

Through Call5, we aim to encourage increased contact across the country, a significant reduction in isolation and loneliness, and an increased sense of belonging to a wider family and community.

For more information and to sign up for Call5 [visit the website](#).

Call and Care – serving your community - This is a project for churches, organisations and community groups to reach out and support people in their communities by equipping and training local volunteers to make contact by telephone.

Identified Need – Many people in our society today are isolated and lonely. The number of people and the intensity of isolation have been exacerbated by the circumstances surrounding the pandemic and varying stages of lockdown. Many do not have access to, or experience of using, online solutions, but almost everyone has a telephone.

Vision – That all those who are isolated are provided with the opportunity of a regular personal call from a friend, neighbour, family member or volunteer.

Mission – To encourage people to make contact with and support those who are isolated by means of the telephone (and other appropriate media), through organised local Call and Care Teams delivered by Community Groups (churches and other organisations).

Implementation – The local church identifies a coordinator/core group and a team of call-makers who will work under their leadership to call out to an identified list of people on a regular basis to check-in with them and be there for them.

Call and Care provides the online training and resources to help prepare the call-makers for their role. For further information [go to their website](#).

Looking after ourselves

According to the British Association and Royal College of Occupational Therapists, during this COVID-19 pandemic, we need more than ever to look after ourselves to ensure that we can keep helping the people we support. Here are some useful things to remember:

- Establish a daily routine. Whilst you are stuck at home, try to stick to a routine of getting up, eating meals, exercising and going to bed at roughly the same time each day.
 - Eat well and drink plenty of water. It's easy to eat and drink too much or too little during stressful times. Keep to regular mealtimes and make sure you have your 5-a-day.
 - Stay active. Exercise and physical activity help reduce stress and increase energy levels. YouTube has lots of fitness videos for at-home exercise. Try and go outside everyday – just remember social distancing.
 - Practice good sleep hygiene: avoid stimulants, such as coffee and electronic devices, especially in the evening; keep to a routine that allows you to unwind; and aim to go to sleep at roughly the same time each day.
 - Stay connected with friends and family using phone, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp or other video messaging apps. This is especially important as we can't have face-to-face conversations with loved ones outside of our households, and many are in self-isolation.
 - Focus on what you do have control over, and limit your time reading the news or discussing the crisis.
 - Unwind and relax. Make sure you find time each day to do activities that help you relax and take your mind off things. You could join an online laughter group or try a
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meditation or prayer app. See below for some Psalms to meditate on with accompanying music.

- Slow down. We still have to look after ourselves, each other and our homes. Use quiet moments to enjoy the normal, the small and the everyday, such as washing up, cooking or having a bath.
- Create 'me time'. Make sure you have a balance of occupations. Make time for yourself and your leisure activities. Try new home-based hobbies such as crafts and cooking. Again, YouTube has lots of 'how to' videos to get you started.
- Do something for someone else. Helping others at any time is good for our wellbeing.
- Meaning and purpose. At times of crises we often rethink our meaning and purpose. Who and what is important to you? How do you normally spend your time? How would you like to be spending your time? What could you do to make this shift happen in the future?

Seeking strength and comfort during the pandemic: Solace in the Psalms

What we think we want in times of uncertainty and fear is to be reassured; to be comforted and told not to worry; everything will be fine. We all know that's not how either life or faith works, and we don't really buy it, as we know deep down, that there is no such thing as cheap consolation.

What we find we need is to know that we are loved and that we have a safe and sacred space, which we can trust to hold us. We are not alone; we have a Companion on the Way. The Bible, in particular the Psalms, can offer us that. We can rage and lament, always secure in the knowledge that God does not over-promise or under-deliver. We will not be let down or abandoned. We will be held, accompanied, until we have come to some sort of peace. And then some.

Psalms which many people have found helpful in times of trouble are very well known. We might imagine them as polished smooth by people's prayers over the years, so they have a special significance for us too, perhaps particularly at this time.

Sometimes we prefer to listen to them sung, or to sing them ourselves, and we include some links in case these are helpful.

Psalm 23 – God's faithfulness

The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing;
He makes me lie down in green pastures, and leads me by still waters...

Related hymns:

[Traditional; Crimond
Townsend](#)

Psalm 42 – Longing for God

As the deer longs for the water brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God.
My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God; when shall I come before
the presence of God?...

Related hymns:

[As the deer longs
Be still my soul](#)

Psalm 67 – Longing for God’s blessing

God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face to shine upon us,
That your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.

Related music:

[Praise God from whom...](#)

[Anthem: The Lord bless you](#)

Psalm 121 – Longing for God

I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?
My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth...

Related hymns:

[How great thou art](#)

[Immortal, Invisible God only wise](#)

[I lift my eyes to the quiet hills](#)

Psalm 131 – Relationship with God

O Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not raised in haughty looks.
I do not occupy myself with great matters, with things that are too high...

Related hymns:

[Abba Father](#)

Prayer resources for the pandemic: [A booklet of prayers online.](#)

Contemporary poetry can of course be helpful too. It may be that you have heard or read Michael Rosen’s poem originally written for the NHS’s 60th birthday. His "[These are the Hands](#)" has added poignancy since his recovery following a long hospital stay with Covid. He reminds us of people in the NHS who care for us throughout our lives

We trust that you might find some of these helpful. Perhaps get in touch with us, to let us know what has been helping you through these strange times?

Keep in Touch

The Diocesan Healing Advisory Group is here to support and encourage churches within the diocese as you seek God’s healing and wholeness, and to share these with others. Please keep in touch and let us know how we can help you! Let us know your good news stories, and about any worries or training needs you have. As a committee we have committed to pray for healing ministries around the diocese and we assure you of our ongoing prayers. You can email [Josie Halla, Ministry for Mission Administrator](#). More information about all of this can be found by visiting our [Healing pages](#) on the Bath and Wells website.

Justine North
Chair, Diocesan Healing Advisory Group

And finally, to encourage us forward, a picture from the wonderful book "The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse", by Charlie Mackesy (published by Ebury Press - Penguin Books). This is truly a book of hope for difficult times.

