

On the Covid Frontline

This comes from Nigel Beeton, (pictured below in his PPE) who works in Radiology in a hospital in the East of England, and who is one of the resident poets on Parish Pump!

During this time of the coronavirus crisis, he is writing a weekly diary of his life at the hospital

I fear I may have spoken a little bit too soon last week. The quiet day was a one-off and we've been back in full flight since then. The official line is that East Anglia is a little behind the national curve, and students of the graphs shown at the daily briefings will be aware that East Anglian cases are still rising slowly.

But there is no longer that dreadful feeling that we are about to become overwhelmed. In fact, there is that relieved feeling that we prepared for the worst and that we have coped. Staff are still tired, the relentless need to carry out familiar tasks wearing cumbersome and uncomfortable PPE is, to say the least, wearying; but nevertheless, we now hear laughter amongst the sighs, and see smiles amidst the tears.

There are still positive signs. On Monday (4th) nobody passed away in the hospital as a direct result of a covid infection. Ours was one of two hospitals in the region to report no deaths, and another significant milestone is passed. The media have been using deaths as a kind of measurement of the severity of the crisis. It is as good a yardstick as any, I'm sure, but the use of words like 'yardstick' or 'measurement' to describe the numbers of families torn apart by this virus feels faintly inappropriate. But a day when no more mourning has been caused *does* seem to justify rejoicing. I've remarked before about the effects of the virus being exacerbated by the enforced separation; it is not a nice way to lose loved ones. The desire to sit by someone we love, to speak gentle words to them and to hold their hand as they slip away is a very deep one. My wonderful father died in 2017, long before Covid-19. I was reading the opening phrases of John chapter 14 to him at the very moment that his breathing stopped. That I was able to do so was a great comfort, at least to us, and I am bitterly conscious that this comfort has been denied to so many over the past few miserable weeks.

If the disease is abating, let us thank God for it, and let us therefore pray that it is doing so for good, and will not return in second or third waves as previous epidemics have done. Then we can consign our deathly 'yardstick' to the pages of history.



Bishop of London and Chief Nursing Officer join national online church service for Florence Nightingale Anniversary



The Bishop of London and the Chief Nursing Officer for England are to take part in a national online service this Sunday celebrating the work of nurses and healthcare workers and marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale.

Bishop Sarah Mullally, the most senior female bishop in the Church of England, and a former Chief Nursing Officer for England, will lead the service, with the Gospel reading from St John read by the Chief Nursing Officer Ruth May.

As in previous weeks, the service will be available from 9am on Sunday on the [Church's website](#), [Facebook page](#) and on [YouTube](#).

In her sermon, Bishop Sarah will speak of the cost that has been paid by nurses and midwives on the frontline of tackling coronavirus and the need to support them now and in the long term. She will say that the nation is 'enormously grateful' for their work.

"This year is the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife. It would have been filled with events to celebrate their contribution to health and society," she will say. "Instead, Covid-19 means that this year is filled with acts of compassion done by nurses and midwives, for which we are enormously grateful."

Bishop Sarah will add that Florence Nightingale, who was in the front line in the battle to save lives and control infection during the Crimean War, knew of the long-term cost of her experiences - and that the 'hardest of challenges' could only be overcome with the support of others.

"If we are going to really celebrate nurses and midwives this year, we need to support them through the cost that they have paid, and to continue to support them when all this is over," Bishop Sarah will say.

Earlier in the service Bishop Sarah will speak about her 'two careers' – as a nurse and a priest – and how they come from one vocation – to follow Jesus Christ.

"People often ask me what it is like to have had two careers, one as a nurse and one as a priest," she will say "I often respond saying that I have had one vocation, to follow Jesus Christ and to make his love and compassion known. I have sought to live my life in the service of others, like so many others do."

The service will feature contributions from nurses who will speak of their experience of working throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Community palliative care specialist Rachel Mead and Felicia Kwaku, Associate Director of Nursing and Head of Nursing Planned Medicine at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in London, will speak of how their Christian faith has helped them during the pandemic.

Ms Kwaku, a nurse for more than 30 years, will speak of the 'honour and privilege' of caring for patients and working alongside 'amazing' staff. She will add that the

loss of her beloved uncle three weeks ago to coronavirus has deepened her personal reflection on the impact of the pandemic.

“This biggest challenge has been seeing the pain and suffering during this pandemic,” she will say. “I have seen suffering for both patients, their loved ones and staff. On some occasions, the staff have also had to cope with the loss of their own loved ones or people they know. I experience God’s presence by starting the day with thanksgiving to God but also I pray for patients and staff all across the world. I see every day as a blessing and my faith as a Christian has enabled me to cope with this unprecedented time.”

Ms Mead, from Weybridge, Surrey, with 33 years of experience as a nurse, will speak of how the prayers of friends and of her church, St Peter’s in Chertsey, Surrey, have been ‘vital’ in recent weeks, in giving her peace and strength to cope with the challenges of the pandemic.

Hundreds of schools to sing virtual ‘Thank You’ as song goes viral

A school chaplain has spoken of her delight after a song written to share hope during Coronavirus closures went viral, with more than a hundred schools now preparing to record their own versions. The song, ***Looking To The Rainbow***, was originally composed by Becky Drake for the school where she is chaplain, Bluecoat Church of England School in Birmingham, but now more than 100 schools across the Church School network and beyond will also sing the song in time for ***Thank a Teacher Day*** on 20th May.



Meanwhile, a video of the Bluecoat School singing the song has already been viewed more than 30,000 times on social media.

The song is now being promoted as part of the Church of England’s #FaithAtHome initiative, which launched last week, with the Church of England’s Chief Education Officer encouraging schools to get involved, and also has the backing of the official ***Thank a Teacher Day*** campaign, run by the Teaching Awards Trust. Any school is welcome to take part and can download comprehensive instructions for school leaders from the [Worship for Everyone website](#). All that is needed is a smartphone and a pair of headphones.

Completed videos can be shared on social with the hashtags #FaithAtHome and #LookingToTheRainbow so they can be shared as part of the final project, a compilation video in time for Thank a Teacher Day on 20th May.

