

It's all your fault!

Just before we went into lockdown (version 2) I was having some work done in the house. To keep the cat safe while there was banging and mess, I thought it sensible to shut him in the conservatory, where at least he could see the garden.

He, however, did not think this was sensible or desirable. Indeed, he totally blamed me for this infringement on his right to freedom, and he let me know of his displeasure.

When he was 'released' he kept running or lying in front of me in order to try to trip me up, and the language, well. Thankfully I do not understand Burmese so the words were a mystery but there was no way of missing the emotion and the anger.

To defend him I must say that with a few cuddles, a comfy lap and a bit of food he was soon placated.

We are in lockdown again, confined to limited activities and freedoms. As someone said recently, "Just as we knew how to organise a service safely we have been shut down".

Of course, we accept that it is for the safety of all, the 'all for one and one for all' bit, and, as Christians, we are called to be responsible members of society. But, I think it is fair to say that it is frustrating and that we are beginning to feel the strain. Being able to communicate by Zoom, telephone or email is fine but it is not the same as having a chat with a flesh and blood human being. So often at church we answer questions, share information; resolve problems during the 2-5 minute conversation before or after worship or meetings. It is a very effective form of communication and I feel that our contact and communication with each other has been seriously inhibited during these 7 months. It is only too easy to send a poorly phrased email or to include bold print or underlining, which can seem innocent to the sender but offensive to a sensitive recipient. We would rarely say face to face what we sometimes put in print.

It is also true that niggles can easily escalate in our mind during lockdown and isolation or we talk with only a few people about something and then feel that 'everyone' thinks this or that.

Each time I listen to the news I feel sorry for the government and their advisors, they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. Whatever they do will be seen as right to some and wrong to others.

They, and we as church, have nothing upon which to judge our decisions because we have never been in this sort of situation before. Churches have not been asked to close before so we have no reference about how to deal with that. We have never been in a time when people have been unable to meet in large groups

for months on end and we are trying our hardest to find ways around that so that all can be involved in a way which engages with all those present, in other words not just those who feel comfortable with 'virtual' meetings.

So, how do we deal with it?

Well, we can't offer the cuddles or a comfy lap to sit on.

I suggest that we need to keep the communication open, not virtual, but real. Keep phoning people so they hear a real voice, send people cards (or chocolate), use WhatsApp (other brands available). One person can still meet with one other for a walk, not quite physical contact but it is surprising what can be shared in a stroll. And, please, don't forget your Ministers, they are still working hard as they find new ways to fulfil their calling, I am sure a bit of encouragement would be appreciated.

The members of the Circuit Leadership Team are very aware of the amount of work which individual members have done to support others and the amount of work which has been done by stewards, treasurers, property stewards, pastoral secretaries/visitors and we offer you our sincere and heartfelt thanks.

If you have any particular concerns please let us know, we are not magicians and cannot wave magic wands, but we will listen and will try to find solutions.

Meanwhile, please be gentle and patient with each other.

Liz

And just to lighten the mood....

