



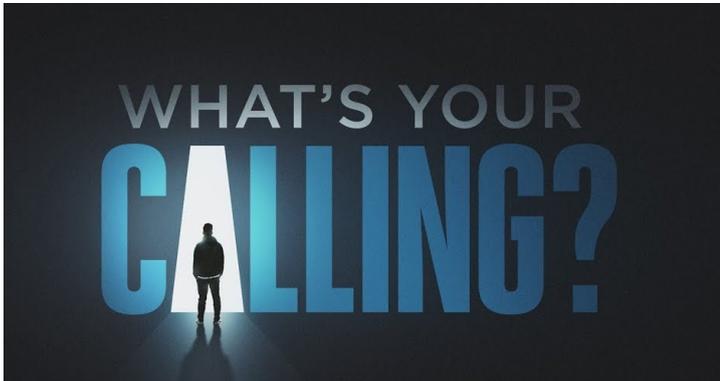
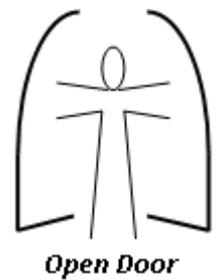
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*A reflection from the Archdeacon of Chester, Mike Gilbertson*

The start of a New Year is often a time of fresh hope, and that's certainly something we all need, looking back on the challenges of 2020. It's also a time when people sometimes assess their priorities in life. New Year resolutions are an example of that, but it can sometimes go much deeper than a new diet or remembering to keep your desk tidy!

Over the last few months, I've been drawn to think again about my own personal priorities. And as I have done that, I have felt drawn back right to the centre of my Christian faith: my relationship with Jesus Christ. I have felt challenged in my prayer life and as I have read the scriptures day by day really to focus specifically on the person of Jesus himself. What does it really mean for me to be his follower? How does that really show in the way I behave towards others? Those are questions we should all ask ourselves, regardless of the role we play in the church, whether we are young or old, whether we are new to the following Jesus or have been trying to do that for many years.

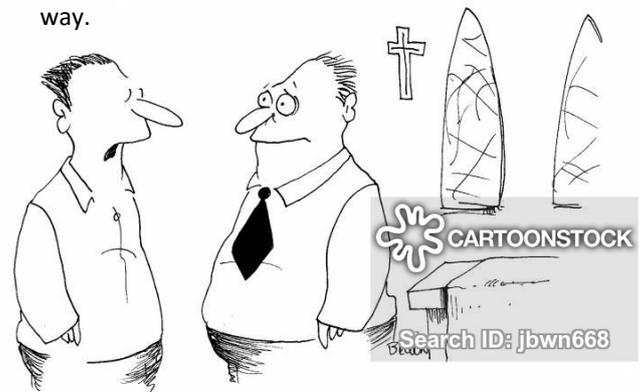
In his letter to the Philippians, Paul talks about his strict religious upbringing, and how he has come to see that what matters much more than that is simply his relationship with Jesus. He says that 'all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ's sake. Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Paul wants to live in a way which is completely shaped by his relationship with Jesus – following Jesus's example and knowing Jesus's love and power in his life each step of the way.

That is a calling we all have as Christians. *(Ed: In our service last Sunday we heard from Garrie and Sue and how, with the*

*help of the Foundations for Ministry Course they embarked on back in September, they are discovering more and more of what it is Jesus is calling them to do with their lives for his sake.)*

On Tuesday evenings through January and February the Diocese is running an online course called Fruitfulness on the Frontline, which will help us to travel that journey together, finding out what Jesus calls us to do and to be in our particular situations, at home, in the workplace, in our neighbourhoods. The current course is sold out but we will run it again later in the year.

Jesus is calling us all to a deeper relationship with him. The better we get to know him, the more wonderful it becomes, as Paul said. Imagine how things might be different if each one of us grew closer to Jesus in 2021 in prayer and in daily life. I am confident that God would use us all in a remarkable way.



"So, does God always call people to ministry or can he text also?"



Sue and the Office Assistants say goodbye to the Church Office page 4-5

Join us for

# Sunday Worship

St Michael's Worship 24th January 2021  
Third Sunday of Epiphany  
**ONE service this week at 10am:  
from home on Zoom**

To join by Zoom click on the  
image or use  
Meeting ID: 939 7279 7379  
Password: 01625

Service Leader: Martin  
Stephens  
Talk: Rev Neil Brighton  
Reading: Mark 1.14-20



**Can't join us live?** Watch the recording of our  
morning worship service on Zoom at a time to suit you  
after Sunday lunchtime [here](#)

## No Computer? No problem!

You can still join any of these Zoom meetings and services  
with your landline phone

If phoning:

Dial **0330 088 5830**.

When prompted, enter the **Meeting ID**  
from any of these boxes **followed by #**

**[For Sunday's service: 939 7279 7379]**

When prompted, enter #



Email any [prayer requests](#) here:



Based on this  
week's lectionary readings:

Resources for adults and families: [click here](#)

Resources for children: [click here](#)

(or printed with your hard copy newsletter)

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# JOIN US ON Zoom

CONNECT WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Wednesday Morning Discussion  
11.00am to 12 noon

Join Zoom meeting [here](#)

Meeting ID: 971 3599 5784 **NEW**

Passcode: 01625



Coffee & Chat



## Monday House Group (restarts 11th January):

When? 7.30pm til 9pm Monday evenings

Join Zoom Meeting [here](#)

Meeting ID: 910 4838 5228

Password: Monday

For more information contact Martin [by email](#) or  
01625 426110.

## Thursday Homegroup

We meet via Zoom at 7.30pm using same details as  
before. All are welcome to join for Bible Study,  
prayer and fellowship, including by phone. Please  
contact David Mayers by [email](#) or phone 01625  
420716 or 07963 802659. This  
week we have started the Bible  
Course.



## Contemplative Prayer

This is no longer taking place in church each  
Friday morning. We will advise when it restarts.

**DONATIONS:** Donating to the  
church for general purposes  
has been made simpler. Either  
click on the blue Donate  
button or scan the QR Code.



Giving to the work and  
worship of St Michael's

Click here to donate towards our church's  
ministry →



# “Living in Love and Faith: What’s the Conversation?”

Monday February 22nd 2021, Zoom: 19:30-21:00

Issues of gender, sexuality, marriage and relationships have proved both pressing and controversial for many Christian churches, including the Church of England. Launched in November 2020, Living in Love and Faith is a set of resources designed to enable congregations to engage in a process of study, reflection and dialogue. In particular, LLF focuses on questions of how Christians might draw on the sources of Scripture, history, Church tradition, science, culture and our personal stories in order to understand how to live as people of faith in a society where understandings and practices of identity, relationships and sexuality continue to change.

Details of the report and accompanying resources can be found [here](#).

As a contribution to this process, Chester Theological Society’s next meeting will aim to provide some background and context to Living in Love and Faith with a view to encouraging participants to engage in further dialogue and debate.

- How did this project come about and what is it seeking to do?
- What are the issues and how can we better understand and explore them?
- How can we work with the materials in the Report and associated resources in order to “equip ourselves to have the conversations”?

The emphasis within the Report is of the importance of conversation in discerning how to be disciples of Christ in relation to gender, sexuality and relationships:

- ◆ Between the sources and resources of the Bible, church practice, theological teaching, culture and our own stories;
- ◆ Among ourselves, even though Christians may hold different opinions and theological viewpoints;
- ◆ Between the Church and wider society.

The meeting will consist of three short presentations by the panellists on different aspects of Living in Love and Faith Report. Participants will then be invited to submit questions and comments for discussion.

## How to register for the meeting

Those wishing to participate will need to apply to CTS for details of Zoom access. Please indicate your interest by February 19th at the latest by emailing either Rachel Barlow (CTS secretary: [rp.amari@btinternet.com](mailto:rp.amari@btinternet.com)) or Elaine Graham (CTS President: [profgraham@gmail.com](mailto:profgraham@gmail.com)). You will then be sent the Zoom link and password.

The mood of this meeting will be deliberately non-partisan. It will focus on exploring what the report has to say, how it handles the key sources of Biblical traditions, church teaching and practice, culture and personal experience. It will seek to honour the intention of *Living in Love and Faith* to encourage deep, serious and broad-based theological reflection and Biblical study.



## Memories of Jane Andrew

It was with sadness that I received a phone call from Jane Andrew’s son, Chris, to say that his mother had died on Sunday, 17th January.

Jane was well known in Macclesfield for her work as a Community Practice Nurse sharing her gifts of caring, listening and comforting with the many patients in her care. On retiring she continued to live in Macclesfield with her husband Bob and enjoying her many interests especially volunteering at MADS, playing Mah-jong along with Monica Gent and other U3A members, despite her failing eye sight and ongoing health problems.

Although, in later years she was unable to attend worship at St Michaels Church, she continued to attend Joyce Millard’s Monday afternoon Home Group and previously was a member of Chris and David Wightman’s Wednesday evening Home Group.

After her husband died she continued to live in Macclesfield before moving to Cyprus to live with her other son, David, although about eighteen months ago she moved to a Nursing Home near East Grinstead to be closer to her son, Chris and his wife.

Jane seemed very happy where she was living and kept in regular contact via phone calls with her friends in Macclesfield and always wanted to know how everyone was at St Michaels and the “gossip”!

She will be sorely missed by her family and friends here in Macclesfield. Our thoughts and prayers are with all her family at this sad and difficult time.

Vicky Darlington

## Memories of Jack Kay



Jack Kay passed away peacefully at his Care Home in Hertford, aged 100, with his family at his side. He will be greatly missed by Nancy (now aged 94) and his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. The funeral took place on 16th December, 2020, at Woollensbrook Crematorium,

# And on the eighth day God created Church Administrators

So, my last working day in the Church Office is finally here (22nd Jan). I have some leave owed to me which I am taking ahead of starting my new job as a full-time Bereavement Officer at Wythenshawe Hospital on Monday 1st February. I am hoping to get my next 3000 word assignment for Foundations for Ministry finished in this time too as well as enjoy some quality time with my two gorgeous fluffy Office Assistants before I have to leave them all day, every week! Not sure who will find that harder to cope with: me or them?!

I thought I'd share with you a bit more about my new role and some reflections of my 11 years plus working in the Church Office.

## What does my new role involve?

Essentially, I will be providing bereavement care following the death of an adult anywhere in the hospital. The role also involves providing expertise to clinical, clerical and managerial staff on bereavement issues and training nursing students on placements, medical students and junior doctors on data regarding deaths. My former HR life before children should come in handy there!

## Why did I apply for this position?

I have been reflecting for some time about moving onto a new career challenge. With two daughters shortly both at university, 'bank of mum' necessitates full-time employment, so I've been looking out for a little while but until this nothing really made me want to switch. I think God knew the right job for me hadn't been advertised yet!

The Foundations for Ministry course has been making me reflect on where God might be calling me to serve. As soon as I read the advert for this job, I just knew I had to apply. I felt it matched my skill set of being both a clerical admin role but also a relational role serving families at a time of need. I have gained lots of valuable skills and experience whilst working in the Church Office which will help me enormously in this role. And I am sure my faith will help too. However, I don't underestimate how challenging this role will be emotionally for me.

## Who I will I be working with

I will be one of two full time Bereavement Officers working alongside the Bereavement Manager and Medical Examiner. I will be liaising with doctors, nurses, the mortuary, GPs, Coroners, police, family liaison officers, spiritual/fair leaders, hospital chaplaincy team, solicitors/executors, bereaved families and funeral directors, ensuring that all the necessary paperwork and formalities are carried out whilst supporting a case load of families. There is also liaison with the National Blood and Transplant Service.

## What I will miss most about here

I will definitely miss the people. I have loved working in the Church Office and have had real scope to put my mark on the



roles. I have enjoyed building relationships with people both within the church and in the town. I have got to know so many people across the team churches but especially within St Michael's.

It was Graham Turner who gave me the job back in the Summer of 2009 just after celebrating my 40th birthday! Chris Wightman was on the selection panel back in the days when I was very scared of her!! She has since become a fabulous friend. At that time Phil Robinson was moving on as Curate to be vicar of Rostherne Church near Knutsford. An analysis had been carried out of how Graham spent his working hours and he was spending too much of his time on admin tasks, so rather than appoint another Curate, they decided to appoint a PA to relieve Graham of the admin. Izzy was six and Katy was eight years old so the part-time role was a good way of getting back into employment after they were both in school having taken a career break from HR. The role was flexible to still be mum to them and get back to work. It was perfect.

Also in the team back then were, of course, Dave Mock and David Wightman and the Curate was Andy Bull and in the office showing me the ropes was Fran Hiles. Fran then retired and we had Julie Mullins covering the printing and photocopying for a time before Emma came along and we worked together from Summer 2013 til the end of 2018 and we remain friends now. For the last two years there has just been me employed in the office and latterly my two gorgeous fluffy assistants! Along the way we had Gerri and Karen as Curates and Steve Murphy on Ordinand placement and

(Continued from page 4)

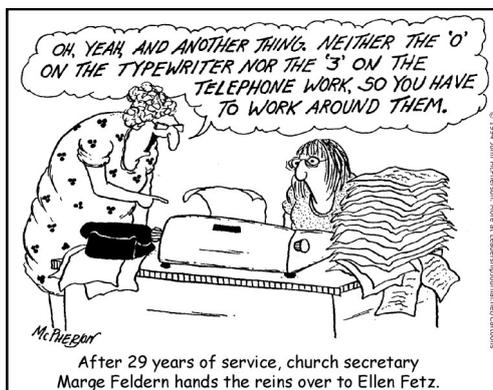
Martin who came along to replace Graham as Team Rector back in September 2016, and then Andy, of course.

I have been very fortunate to work with some great colleagues. There has been plenty of laughter and good times but also some real sad and challenging times. I was heartbroken when David died and when Graham left and felt a great sadness when Karen left, but thankfully we remain firm friends. I had formed a strong bond with each of them. More recently, I have enjoyed working alongside Martin and Andy and adapting to new ways of working and growing from new opportunities they have afforded me and have been thankful to Rachel too for her constant support and care, particularly this year when I have been based at home.

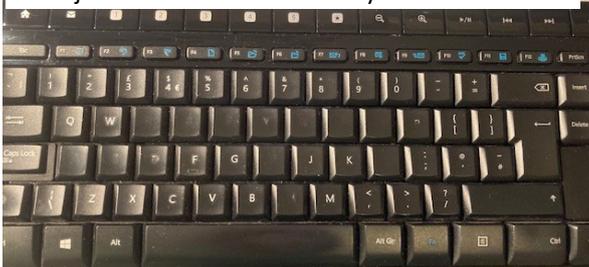
I have shared many special moments with many of you in the Office over the years. The Office really is where it all happens I can tell you!! I have enjoyed the honour and privilege of the trust given to me by many of you and you have all given me such strong support and encouragement and shown belief in me. I hope I have served you well and that will be how I will



Church Secretaries — God's Guardians of the Universe



No joke either—look at the keys I've worn off!!



be remembered; as well as being the girl with a big smile! The role has most definitely been both formational and transformative. But, at times, the boundaries have been difficult between Sue, the employed person, and Sue, the church member.

#### What I'm most excited about

I am excited to be taking on a new challenge. The NHS is a wonderful organisation, but a big one! There will be lots of new systems and processes to learn, new legislation to be aware of and lots of new names to learn, people to get to know and relationships to form and nurture. And of course, I am starting at the NHS in a pandemic and in the winter months and all that will inevitably bring. I am also excited by the prospect of undertaking a Level 4 counselling qualification which is required for the role.

I am equally excited by the possibilities I leave behind for the church. It is a chance for Martin, the wardens and the Team Council to review and decide what level of resource they want and need and what the key tasks are for that job holder. It is also a chance for someone else to take up the role in the office and grow and transform as I have done.

So it's not a goodbye as I will still be part of St Michael's but it's goodbye to the Church Office which has been home for a long while. When I finally lock the door as I leave, I will look back on my time there with happiness and great memories. Thank you to you all as you have all played your part in that.

Sue xx

### How to contact the Office after 22nd Jan

When we no longer have Sue plus her two assistants in the office, several volunteers will be trying to keep most office functions going. Please would you be careful to use the correct email address for the purpose of your message.

- For the newsletter: [stmikesnotices@gmail.com](mailto:stmikesnotices@gmail.com)
- For bookings, building maintenance: [office@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk](mailto:office@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk)
- For service details, rotas, anything else: [clergy@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk](mailto:clergy@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk)

These email addresses will be accessed at least once per week, but not every day, so don't expect an instant response.

The office phone will also be accessed at least once each week.

# Advent Book Review No.3

A reflection by Jenny Wild

**Haphazard by Starlight**, by Janey Morley, the book which our group 'Faith Journeys' chose to study during Advent.

Janet Morley says 'Advent is celebrated when the year is becoming darker and colder, moving into the death and dormancy of winter.

Before we can greet the coming of light, we need to engage with some themes that are challenging and occasionally fearful.

Like the Magi who travelled a long distance to search out and adore the infant Jesus, and took some wrong turns on the way.

We too have a journey to undertake before we have walked **Haphazard by starlight** into the kingdom of heaven'.

The book is a collection of poetry, mostly of Christian content but occasionally not. It offers poems and meditations for the Advent season.

Contributions are from a diverse group of poets, ranging from Rowan Williams, Philip Larkin, Elizabeth Jennings, Sylvia Plath and DH Laurence, about twenty in all.

There is a poem for each day of Advent from December 1st right through to Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>.

Through her commentary, Janet Morley examines each poem in detail, helping the reader to a better understanding and closes with a challenging and thought provoking question.

For example – What new responsibility could God be calling you to this year?

We all found it challenging and a little dark at times but definitely a worthwhile read especially if you enjoy poetry.

Jenny

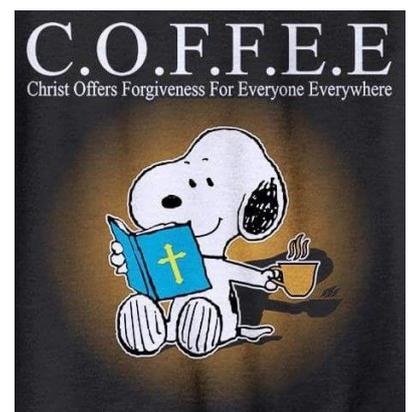


**Ladies... check on your sisters-in-law! They are stuck at home with your brothers. They are NOT OK!!!!**



'Support bubbles have been such an important part of this year.'

Not today Love



# Life Enhancing Computers

For all of us who feel only the deepest love and affection for the way computers have enhanced our lives, read on.....

At a recent computer expo (COMDEX), Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated:

'If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving \$25 cars that got 1,000 miles to the gallon..'

In response to Bill 's comments, General Motors issued a press release stating:

If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics:

1. For no reason whatsoever, your car would crash.....Twice a day on some models.
2. Every time they repainted the lines in the road, you would have to buy a new car.
3. Occasionally your car would die on the freeway for no reason. You would have to pull to the side of the road, close all of the windows, shut off the car, restart it, and reopen the windows before you could continue. For some reason you would simply accept this.
4. Occasionally, executing a manoeuvre such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
5. Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was reliable, five times as fast and twice as easy to drive - but would run on only five percent of the roads.
6. The oil, water temperature, and alternator warning lights would all be replaced by a single 'This Car Has Performed An Illegal Operation' warning light.
7. The airbag system would ask 'Are you sure?' before deploying.
8. Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.
9. Every time a new car was introduced car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.
10. You'd have to press the 'Start' button to turn the engine off.
11. If all else fails, you could call ' customer service ' in some foreign country and be instructed in some foreign language how to fix your car yourself!

David Smith



## "Arrghh I can't do that!"

As we approach the flagship diocesan event, Called to Serve this Saturday 23rd January, Bishop Mark, reflects on his own calling to be a bishop and reminds us that even if we doubt our own abilities from time to time, as we all do, it is by following God's call, and with his help, that we can grow to be the person God wants us to be.

Bishop Mark says: "Vocation is about God speaking deep into our lives and saying: 'Will you come and follow me and will you come and do this for me?' And that's so important because when God calls us to do something he also helps us do it. So if you're anything like me, you kind of start out thinking, 'argh, I can't do that!' But it's amazing, when God takes you step-by-step, the things he leads you into doing."

To listen to Bishop Mark's reflection, click on the image above.

Please remember in your prayers members from our church who have been inspired to attend this course to help them discern how and where God might be calling them?

Over the past months the Foxhill prayer team has continued to pray for individuals, parishes and the wider diocese.

If you know of a situation that we can pray for, please let us know either by text to 07513 170210. or e-mail

[foxhill@chester.anglican.org](mailto:foxhill@chester.anglican.org).

Prayers received will be distributed to volunteers as part of their daily rhythm of prayer.

Please contact Jonathon Green if you would like further information about becoming an intercessor on the Foxhill prayer team:

E: [jonathon.green@chester.anglican.org](mailto:jonathon.green@chester.anglican.org) T: 01928 733777 or 07513 170210.

# Spare a thought for the parents homeschooling and working

## HOMESCHOOL PROJECT: Match The Lids

by Revd Jenny Bridgman, Director of Studies for Pastoral Workers

My day revolves around a whiteboard. Each morning, we copy very carefully the day's timetable for each of the five people in our house:

9am B: Maths lesson  
10am Dad: funeral, C: Literacy lesson, Mum: phone calls  
11am Mum: meeting, E: Phonics work  
12 noon Lunch  
1pm "PE"  
1.30pm Mum: desk work, B: Literacy lesson, E: Painting, Dad: meeting  
3pm Mum: meeting, C: "Storytime" live lesson  
7pm Mum: teaching, Dad: meeting, B, C E: bedtime!

It looks so orderly, but the whiteboard lies. It doesn't tell you about the crumbs and spills, the toilet accidents and the squabbles, the meltdowns (mine, mostly) and the curveball phonecalls and the malfunctioning technology and the pressure. It doesn't tell you that our youngest child has taken to regular toileting accidents because of her lack of routine, that the middle and eldest children cry to be in school with their friends (and that Mum and Dad are WAY too embarrassing to appear anywhere on the camera during live lessons). It doesn't tell you about the sheer amount of Haribo needed as bribery for one sentence of writing: nor about slammed doors and frustration bubbling into anger and the 3am nightmares and the sheer endlessness of it all.

Like millions of parents, my home and work were thrown into chaos last month with the shock announcement at 8pm one January evening that most children would be home learning from 8am the following morning. A good decision with terrible timing, as the relentlessness of parenting took on new meaning for the second time in 12 months. This is the reality of home learning facing so many in our parishes.

I am painfully aware of my privilege. We are blessed with a large vicarage and garden, with technology that just about meets the demands of five people living and working online. We have an income and food, we are two responsible adults with flexible diaries, and our home is mostly warm and comfortable. We are healthy and safe. Our children are part of a supportive school, and we are surrounded by friends within our community. We have more privilege than most.

But I need you to know the impossibility of our situation. Not for sympathy or for a solution, but because the strain and stress on families right now is significant, and our awareness of this must lead us to prayer and practical support through these painful days. If my family, with all our privilege and competence and support, are struggling through this, then chances are you, or someone you know, is struggling too.

It's hard to say "it's hard". The pressure to be a good priest (or colleague) and a good parent is ever present, and something I have spoken and written about for years. That pressure through these days has intensified and grown. People respond to traumatic



circumstances differently, either accelerating into 'heroic' responses, or shutting down almost completely. Neither frame of mind is conducive to a comfortable atmosphere for living, working, and learning at home 24/7. It is near impossible to step back from this and ask for help. Partly because there is little that can be done. In this situation, awareness is probably as good as solutions.

If you know someone in this situation, please make contact. Ask them about it. Tell them you can see how impossible it is. Be the calming presence at the end of a text message. If you have oversight of or responsibility for them, please do all you can to take off the pressure from the people you manage. Listen to and hear their pain. Your awareness can be enough.

If you want to do more, some of the kindest things people have done for us include writing letters to the kids, recording bedtime stories via WhatsApp, sending chocolate in the post, and (once!) the very generous delivery of an afternoon tea. Flowers, biscuits or wine left on the doorstep could all say, "I can see this is hard".

And if you are living through the relentlessness of balancing the demands of childcare and work, you are not alone. If it feels impossible, that's because it is. The cliché "be kind to yourself", as overused as it is, is never more important than now. Be kind, let go, and know that whatever you can manage is enough.

Through these days I am holding onto a prayer from the New Zealand Prayer Book, with the line:

It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be. New Zealand Prayer Book

My day ends with the same whiteboard. We rub it off: a blank slate, and await the timetable for the following day. Time moves a day, an hour, at a time. Perhaps more will be left undone than done in these days, and that's ok. It must be if we, and our children, are to emerge from this winter more whole in body, mind and spirit.