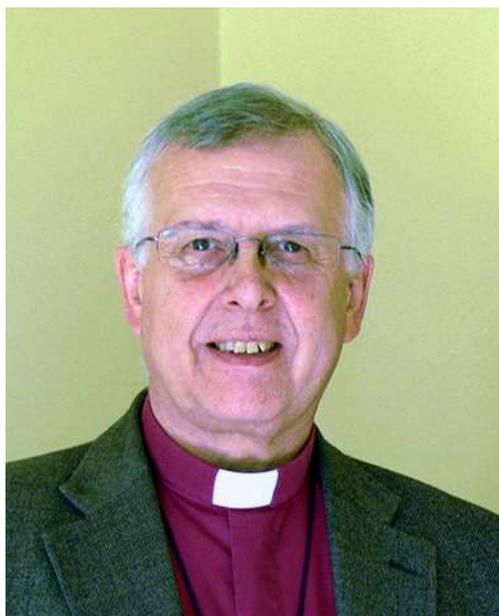


## New beginnings

Is it possible to write in the present day without mentioning the coronavirus or COVID-19?

Possibly (by cheating, as I did above), but it is not possible to claim that the world – our world, God's world – isn't already a very different place.

I am writing at the start of July. Most readers will see this in August. Things have been moving incredibly quickly since March, when the world we knew changed beyond our imagining. As I write, we are preparing to reopen some churches for public worship, but many clergy, and many more lay people, are wary or reluctant about taking that step. Who could have guessed that?



From the beginning of August, 'shielding' will be no more, but it seems that most of those who had to be shielded are in no hurry to rush out to work, or to shop, or to go to church. Who could imagine that people would be reluctant to leave their homes after over four months of virtual house arrest?

And who would have thought that we would be encouraged off public transport and back into our cars? Or that the government would still be paying people not to go to work?

This time of late summer and early autumn is when we have to press the reset button and start life all over again. In fact, of course, some wonderful things have gone on, and there has been some very beautiful living during the crisis – as well as some tragic dying – and we mustn't lose the lessons we have learnt. But now, we have to look hard at how best to get back to a sustainable future: going to work, opening our churches, learning to socialise again. All those things are likely to look different, but we need to do them.

God is the expert at fresh starts. We need to take this to him, and seek his wisdom. Let's ask him to give us his new birth – as individuals, as churches, as a society.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Donald". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

+Donald  
Bishop of Peterborough

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