

## Faith in Troubled Times

Three thousand years ago, a person of deep faith wrote – and the people of God first sang – some of the most beautiful words in history:

*“The Lord is my Shepherd, I **will not want**. He feeds me in green pasture.” (Psalm 23: 1,2)*

They voice a confident trust that with God as their shepherd, **they will not wander**:

*“He leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul.” (vs 2 and 3)*

With remarkable faith, they declare that whatever life may bring, with the Lord as their shepherd, **they will not worry**. They sing of God’s ever-presence besides them at the darkest times:

*“Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff comfort me.” (v 4)*

We are living through extraordinary and disturbing times. The coronavirus is causing death and deep disruption to our normal patterns of living. Tragedy has included members of the diocesan family. The total lockdown, self-isolation, suspension of public worship and closure of church buildings means that we have had no option but (in the phrase of the Archbishops) “to become a different sort of church”.

People have found new ways of caring for each other. Good neighbour schemes have emerged. Our telephones have been busy. Many have shopped for the housebound, clapped in the street, lit candles, and put teddy bears and NHS rainbow signs in their windows. Many churches have produced deeply moving acts of worship online. I’ve discovered social media I didn’t know existed! We have found new ways of being “together apart” and “holding hands in the Spirit”.

I believe as a Church we have rediscovered that our spiritual lives must be rooted in daily prayer and Bible reading at home, not just Sunday worship in church. Jesus is with us wherever we are – we hold on to his promise that he will be with us whatever happens.

I have recently become chair of a small national charity called ReSource whose aim is to help “little, local and ordinary churches” draw on the Holy Spirit for discipleship and mission. The Director has written these helpful words: “Whatever these coming days hold, let’s be mindful of one another, alert to the cry of a hurting world, and confident in the love of God, from which nothing can separate us.” May God bless us all.

With my love, prayers and best wishes,

Rt Revd John Holbrook  
Bishop of Brixworth



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Produced by the Diocesan Office, The Palace, Peterborough PE1 1YB

Tel: 01733 887000 Email: [communications@peterborough-diocese.org.uk](mailto:communications@peterborough-diocese.org.uk)  
[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk)