



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

The Archbishop writes in today's York Press about the effects of the pandemic. The article follows in full...

How has the pandemic changed us?

Well, I'm not sure I have anything original to offer this conversation, but three things immediately spring to mind. And although there has been nothing good about the horrors and sorrows of Covid19, they all point to the indomitable, persevering goodness of the human spirit and how we can find good things even in the midst of despair and sadness.

They also point towards a new way of inhabiting the world beyond Covid – a way that will be better and healthier and more sustainable than the world we have left behind.

First, and probably most important of all, we have rediscovered the fact that we belong to each other.

Even though our poorest communities have suffered disproportionately, there can be no 'me and you' or 'them and us' with Covid. It must be we. Covid will not be dealt with anywhere until it is dealt with everywhere.

The most obvious sign of this is the vaccine programme itself. It is wonderful that our country is taking the lead. But we won't get beyond Covid until the whole world is vaccinated.

This rediscovery of a most basic human truth, that my well-being is tied up with my neighbour's well-being, should now be the guiding principle for all public policy as we move forward.

Secondly, and flowing from the realisation that we belong to each other, we have learned to appreciate the real dignity and value of people's labour: especially those whose jobs we may have considered menial and unimportant a year ago.

Who would have thought that alongside the heroes of the National Health Service's inspiring example of selfless care, we would have also come to value those who stock the supermarket shelves or drive the delivery vans or volunteer in food banks?

We used to measure each other's worth by the size of their salary. Now it must be the size of their heart. We have learned that we need each other. We, therefore, need to build a world where everyone is properly rewarded; where everyone's contribution is valued; and where there is opportunity for everyone to have work and achieve their potential.

Thirdly, there has been a digital coming of age.

Even though it has been hard being so isolated from each other, we have found creative ways of serving each other and reaching out to each other and therefore learned to inhabit the digital landscape.

Although we long to be able to meet again in person, this way of communicating and meeting online is here to stay. It may indeed provide some of the clues for working out how we will find more sustainable ways of inhabiting the earth itself.

We all know we need to tread more lightly on the earth. We all know we must radically reduce our carbon footprint. We all know that in the world before Covid many of us were too busy and too frantic. But in this past year we have caught a glimpse of and experienced different rhythms of life. At times this has been hard, especially for those most isolated and for those who have suffered much. But at the same time we have begun to see a more sustainable way of living that will not only be good for the earth itself, it will also be good for us and our well-being.

I long for us to get beyond Covid. But I don't want to go back to where we were. I want us to learn that we belong to each other. I want us to learn that we need each other. I want us to learn to live more lightly on the earth.

Covid has brought us to our knees. Now I'm praying that we will rise up and build a better world.

York Minster will be open from 11.30am until 6pm on Tuesday 23 March for the National Day of Reflection on the anniversary of the first lockdown. Pre-booking is not necessary but entry might be slightly delayed to manage capacity inside the Minster.

Marie Curie has produced resources and advice on how to mark the National Day of Reflection at <https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/get-involved/day-of-reflection>. The Church of England has also produced prayers and resources at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/evangelism-and-discipleship/mission-network-news/23rd-march-national-day-reflection>.

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