

## **A Warden's emotional journey**

On Monday 16 March, the first outside booking was cancelled due to the coronavirus situation. Four days later, all bookings had vanished, and Meetings for Worship were about to be suspended. On my answerphone, I found a message from our Clerk of Trustees, reassuring me that my salary would be guaranteed until the end of June. It suddenly dawned on me that my job (and, as Resident Warden, my home that goes with it) might be at stake. I spent that Friday evening in tears.

The following three months were a mixed bag. My spirits were lifted by a new friendship, long walks, and regular contact with a few Friends (including my line-manager). Loneliness made occasional appearances. The weekly "Wardens Talking" Zoom meetings provided support and a sense of connection. The emptiness of the Meeting House was heart-breaking.

Once back at work in early July, I rattled through the re-opening procedures. After about two weeks, it gave me a great sense of satisfaction to remove the 'temporarily suspended' sign from our worship times notice in the window and to welcome the first post-lockdown worshipper. Soon after, I started to get increasingly exasperated over the ever-changing, often kafkaesque, government guidance.

In September, talk of a second lockdown pushed me over the edge. My accumulated anger and frustration turned into fury and rage. I had to do something to stay sane. I stopped following the news and avoided coronavirus discussions (which, unfortunately, meant to cease attending "Wardens Talking" meetings). I tried to busy myself with other things to get the virus off my mind. I managed to reduce my anger below boiling point. Not far below.

I have a supportive Meeting and good employers. Throughout my furlough and part-furlough, I remained on full salary. Then I was given a new job description and employment contract. Performing more tasks in slightly fewer hours doesn't sound like a great deal. Under the circumstances, it's excellent. The loss of income is manageable, and my job and home are safe for now. I'm more fortunate than millions of others that are affected by this ongoing tyranny of fear. Thinking of all those less fortunate people makes my fury return. Not thinking of them would be giving in to the widespread ignorance all over this crazy world.

Autumn saw spells of mild depression creeping in. In late October, during an Experiment with Light meditation, I got a clear sense that the most important thing for me to do right now is to look after myself - not just for my own sake, but also for the sake of others and my Meeting. I remembered a story I wrote many years ago, in which hope is personified as a young woman who walks past me in a moment of total despair. In the story, I ask her who she is. She answers "Hope", but keeps walking, and I have to run after her to catch up with her. In my meditation, I found that I had made the mistake of standing still in the wrong place and now have to catch up with Hope, then take her hand, so that I won't lose her again.

One of the Light meditation prompts reads: "Trust the Light and continue to wait." - It sums up very well where I'm at now. Continuing to wait doesn't mean slothfully waiting for things to change, but actively waiting for opportunities to act - like the herons do around here. And to trust in the Light is to walk with Hope.

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