

Hello everyone,

I hope you're all safe and well and are coping with the very different demands of lockdown whatever that might mean for you all as individuals and also within your families. I know that both Beverley and I have needed time to adapt and form our own routines which hasn't always been easy! Working from home is a strange concept especially when you are a teacher or instrumental teacher like Beverley - what would we have done without technology!

It really does seem like a very long time since we last met either at church or as a band at practice and who knows how long it will be until we meet again. This would have been my week to do devotions in practice so I have typed up some of my thoughts that you will hopefully find helpful and encouraging.

Personally, how have I filled my time? For the first few weeks of lockdown, I didn't have that much school work to be getting on with - it was like the holidays had come early! The ISS tour to America was cancelled so I made a start on writing the music for Harriet and Andrews wedding. Over the last few weeks the work load has upped and I've had to write new bits of work for students to complete at home which is difficult when they don't have music keyboards or musical resources. I have also had to work out the grades for those students who should have been sitting exams in the summer if they had of been taking place - no pressure there then!

As a music teacher, you may find it strange to find out that I don't have time to practice. Some of you will hopefully have seen the email I sent round a couple of weeks ago with the link to some video lessons that Steven Mead produced. I have been using these to help me re-focus and re-engage with practice which has been much needed. There has been a lot of talk recently about how our lives and schools won't return back to what we used to call 'normal'. I know for sure now that practice will feature in my new 'normal' - despite rejections from the neighbours!

I've also been fortunate to have the opportunity to get out of the house and put in some some cycling and running miles which has been a nice use of my daily exercise allowance but this has also given me a chance to re-think my cycling technique which has been beneficial and yes there is such a thing! Not only has this practice and thinking time helped me with my playing and exercise but also given me a chance to think about where I am spiritually.

In the past, like I'm sure many of you have done, I have gone through the motions of rehearsals during the week and going to 'The Army' on a Sunday as a matter of routine. It

was an expectation - not a choice. Only when those routines are taken away from you do you realise what an important part of life they play.

Have I spent as much time reading the bible or being with God compared to riding my bike or running the streets? No I haven't if I'm being honest. But it has given me time to process thoughts and to re-evaluate my spiritual journey.

This new way of life has given me the opportunity to slow down, take note of my surroundings and God's creation. I have had chance to marvel at the way nature works. It has given me a chance to rest and re-focus on a love that will not let me go.

When I am getting on with work at home, I always put my headphones on and listen to music without trying to analyse it. I have recently be turning to the latest release by the New York Staff Band called 'Proclamation'. This is a double CD release featuring the bands 'normal' concert repertoire and a number of solos by Philip Cobb. One of the solos that Phil plays on the CD is entitled Rest which is an arrangement of the song composed by Greg Nelson.

The lyrics are as follow:

Rest, the Lord is near
Refuse to fear, enjoy His love
Trust, His mighty power
Fills every hour, of all your days

There is no need
For needless worry
With such a Saviour
You have no cause to ever
Doubt, His perfect Word
Still reassures, in any trial

The recording by the NYSB and Philip Cobb can be heard here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G8xHaTo5m8>

Over the last couple of years, the ISS have been singing a song entitled 'O Love' written by Elaine Hagenberg based on the words by George Matheson. Have a listen to this recording from the ISS (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp-OdcdY3wk>) and focus the words and just let God's love flow over you and remember that whatever we are facing, God's Love won't let us go and will always be with us even if we don't spend as much time as we should in his company.

'O Love that will not let me go,

I rest my weary soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe, That in Thine ocean depths
its flow may richer, fuller be.'

May we all remember during this time that our spiritual fitness and activity is so important,
and that he is our best thought whenever that thought may be.

Keep safe and I look forward to seeing you all as soon as we possibly can!

Chris