

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF A HOLIDAY IN LOCKDOWN

Tips for Taking Holiday

In our Leadership in Lockdown Webinar we suggested five tips for taking a holiday during this restricted time:

- **Take it** The danger is that we all hold back from taking holiday hoping for less restricted times. But the reality is they may not come this year. So take a holiday. Don't go from Christmas to Christmas or even September without one.
- **Plan it** It will probably take more time to plan than usual, yet most of us will have less energy for planning because it (a) doesn't feel as exciting (b) we're exhausted by the current situation and our efforts to respond well to it. Radical thought, use some work time to plan for your holiday (see below for some further thoughts on this).
- **Spend on it** To make it fun and enjoyable spend what you would normally spend on a holiday. Buy a bike, canoe, hot-tub. Buy in nice food and drink. Buy a new board game or some lovely books. Pay for an online course on something you've always wanted to do.
- **Protect it** Do everything you can to put some boundaries around your holiday. Make sure people know you are on holiday. Set up a first port of call, and ensure they know under what conditions to contact you. Lock your study door and give someone else the key. Buy yourself a cheap mobile and give that number to family and friends so you can turn off your work phone.

- **Rename it** Some people may find it helpful not to call it a holiday and give it another name. Psychologically it might help in letting go of normal holiday expectations and embracing the reality that this is different.

Three church leaders reflect on their own very different experiences of taking holiday in this restricted season. Of course, our own situation and preferences won't be the same, but perhaps their reflections will stimulate ideas that will work for you.

Reflection 1: Female, Living on Own

Holidays – a time to shut down the email, set aside the diary, take off the watch, and relax and see what the days bring. Or at least they are for me. On the Myers-Briggs scale I am a strong 'P' – that is, my preference is for less planning and more spontaneity. Parish ministry though requires me to plan and order my days, to live by the diary and the clock. When I go on holiday, the last thing I want is for my days to be planned and ordered; the luxury of time off is being able to wake up each day, see how I feel, and let the day unfold. So no-one was more surprised than me to discover that the key to a relaxing holiday during lockdown is planning!

We all know how hard it is to have a holiday at home, so when it came to thinking about my post Easter break I began with managing my expectations. Of course it wasn't going to be the same as getting away, and to think it would be was a sure route to frustration and disappointment. At that stage we were only allowed to leave the house for exercise once a day, so my options were limited: how could I make it feel different to all the other days, and crucially, how could I switch off from work mode and relax?



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Counter-intuitively, I needed to plan. I didn't plan every minute of every day, but I worked out what I needed, and then how I could find that:

- I needed something that would help my brain to leave work behind, something that would occupy me and give me something else to think about.
- I needed to get outside of the house, and be active.
- I needed something that would give me a sense of satisfaction.
- I needed to relax, enjoy a good book, and some good food.

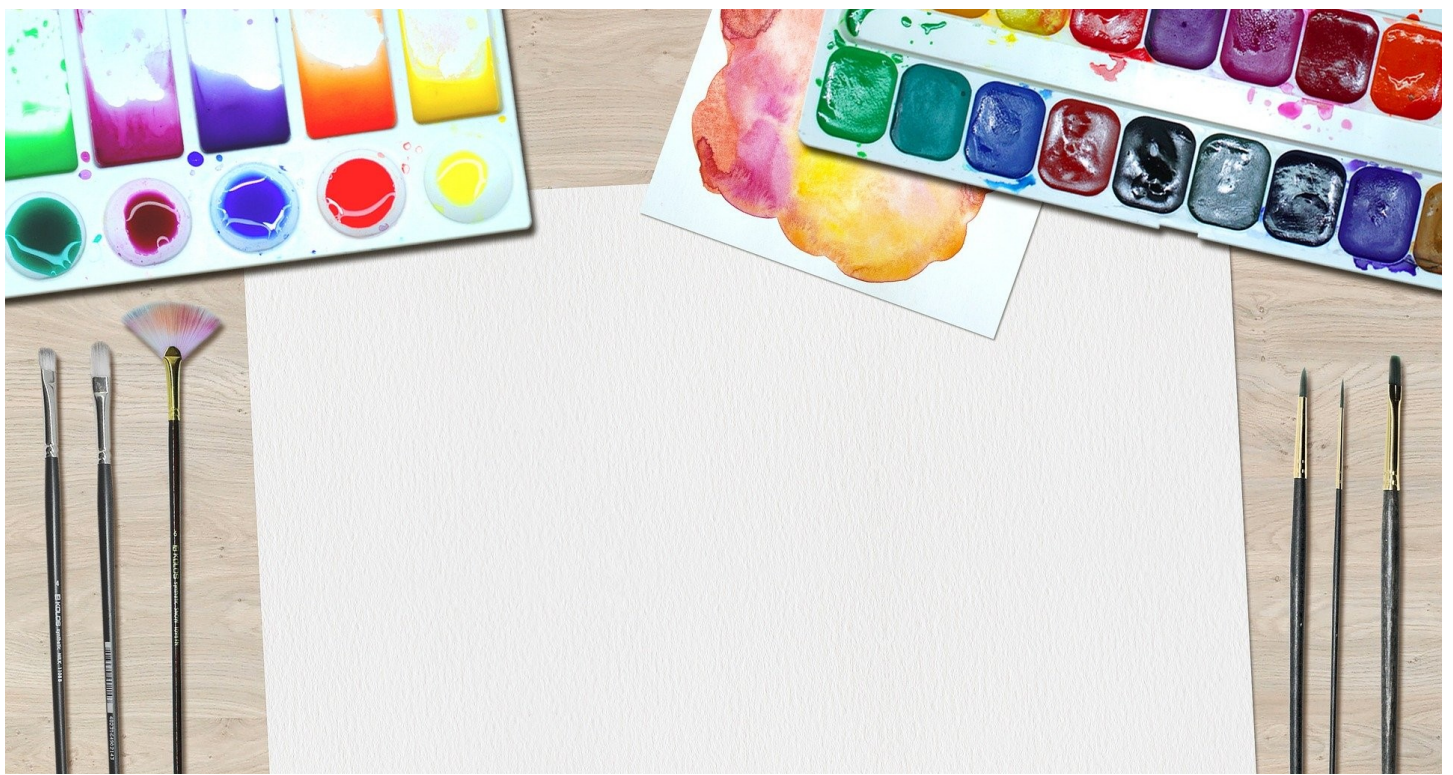
For me the answer was in refurbishing a wooden garden chair; it used a different part of my brain, it absorbed me and gave me great satisfaction in having a usable chair again. Working on the chair enabled me to switch off, and so then I was also able to get lost in a good book, enjoy taking time to cook, chat to friends, and rest. It wasn't the same as going away - but it was still good, and I was still able to make memories that did not involve endless box sets. I can't wait until I can revert to my normal holiday style, but for now I've learned that even for this plan-averse person, planning is the key to a good holiday.

Reflection 2: Male, Married, No Kids at Home

Top tips (in no particular order):

- Ruthlessly avoid the usual routines of work. Don't go near any work related emails, computers, rooms, or other habits. If it helps, and if there is someone else in the house get them to hold you accountable in this (give them express permission in advance). Don't answer the phone other than to selected individuals.

- Treat yourself to good food and wine, whether home cooked or ordered in from outside.
- Plan each day in advance, at least in broad outline, so that you don't just fritter time away and end up feeling that you have wasted time.
- If you can find a way of making the time (even if it is just 15 minutes a day), find something creative and absorbing to do. I did a couple of woodworking projects (an established hobby) but also forced myself to pick up my watercolour paints for the first time in ten years. I spent time each day for four days painting and, after the initial demoralising experience of wasting paint, paper and time on failed attempts, found the experience to be wonderfully restorative and novel. I painted in a spare room I rarely go in - this added to the sense of novelty and freshness.
- Watch a couple of films you have been keeping for such a time as this.
- Try and find some new places for daily exercise. I explored some of the woods near our home, following paths I hadn't walked before. The novelty was great.
- Try and do some of the things you rarely have time for during normal working time e.g. playing games, reading novels.
- One of the things I enjoyed most was going through some of my photos of favourite places, including the place we would have visited had this holiday not been spent at home, and reliving previous holidays, savouring the memories. This was further helped by choosing some favourite views as subjects for painting and thus revisiting cherished places.



Reflection 3: Female, Married, Child at Home

Last week I took the inside of a week off and holidayed at home. This isn't something we're used to doing as a family, and so our experience of a 'holiday' after Easter felt very un-holiday like and was a bit of a disappointment... and felt like a bit of a 'waste' of holiday allowance.

This time our expectations of 'holidaying' at home were more realistic. We decided to think of it as a period of 'rest and relaxation' rather than holiday as we would know it.

We had a list of potential things we would like to do, a bit like a bucket list, which ranged from:

- Baking cakes, bread and making ice cream.
- Gardening.
- Sorting out our teenager's bedroom so they could work in the light a bit better.
- Playing board games.
- Movie nights.
- Cooking evening meals together and eating crisps beforehand (something we don't normally have in the house), a take away one evening.



Normally we go away when we take annual leave, but because we couldn't, at the end of this week there is a greater sense of 'order' to the house and garden, which in its own way is a blessing and a positive outcome from staying at home.

Before taking this time off, I was tired and this was obvious because it was harder for me to process things well and I was largely living in reactive mode. Since coming back I have noticed that my mental well being is better and the haze from before has lifted, and so I now have had the ability to plan my focus for the couple of months ahead.

The aspect of this R&R time at home that we did less well was protecting it from work. Both my husband and I had periods of time when the time was interrupted. Some of that was planned, some of it wasn't.

We are already looking ahead to the summer... With the demand to go away somewhere in the UK dramatically increasing, due to foreign travel being restricted, I realise that the price of going away in the summer could be beyond our budget. I also know that the things we like doing on holiday might be things we can't do and so expectations would have to be adjusted again. So the question I'm pondering is 'what would a full week of R&R at home be like?' and 'how can I prepare for it so that I can enjoy and engage with it in the best way possible?'

Holidaying as a Single Person

As a bunch of single people we got together (virtually of course) to chat about our thoughts about holidaying during lockdown. Here is a brief summary of some issues we identified and some ideas we came up with. We offer them not just for those leaders who are single, but also for those who are married in the hope that it might help you to support your single colleagues.

ISSUES

Holidaying as a single person often presents some challenges, and being in lockdown simply exacerbates many of them. Of course, many of the particular challenges at this time are shared with everyone else, but there are some specifics that may make it even more demanding. For example, planning and taking a holiday with someone else is generally easier and more fun than doing it on your own.

Some particular struggles during restrictions include:

- Having to travel significant distances just to connect with key people, and not being able to stay overnight.
- Lack of physical touch.
- If we holiday from home normal housework needs to continue so no break from that (for a couple, at least this can be shared).
- Buying in take-aways isn't easy as a single person as portions tend to be for a minimum of two people.
- Many of us are feeling 'locked in' our homes already, the thought of spending a week still 'at home' without work to do is frankly somewhat overwhelming. It actually causes anxiety, fear and even panic just thinking about it, so better not to think about it and keep working (yes, we know this isn't a long-term solution!).

IDEAS

We came up with the following ideas knowing that holidays are a very individual thing, but maybe they will spark ideas for others that might work for them.

- Whilst holidays may be possible under less restrictive circumstances later in the year, they may not, so 'plan for the worst, and hope for the best.' Therefore put a summer holiday in the diary (and sooner rather than later if we haven't had a holiday since February).
- Planning a holiday is hard work and takes energy. Many find they have very little energy on rest days at the

moment, so put a holiday planning day to plan into the diary and treat it as a work day.

- Try to link up with another single person to share ideas and thoughts about how to have a holiday.
- If possible, plan your holiday at the same time as a friend (could be a single person, a couple or a family) who lives relatively close to you and then arrange to have some days out together.
- When it comes to thinking about Sunday services, if you don't have colleagues who can take them on, talk with your Churchwardens and agree that no services will happen on that Sunday and instead recommend people attend some others (you can make suggestions). The reality is that lots of churches aren't holding any online services at all, so you have been doing a great job. Time for a break.

IDEAS FOR WHAT TO DO

- **Learn something new** Take an online course (some are done in groups, so you can meet new people if that is your thing). Ideas include photography, jewellery making, baking, wood turning, guitar, calligraphy, furniture restoring, painting, Lego building.
- **Change your space** If you can, move into another bedroom, rearrange the furniture in a living area, buy a new item that you could enjoy, or if you are the creative type, deck a room out in your favourite 'holiday' décor.
- **Get out** Plan some walks, bike rides, outdoor swims, canoeing or whatever outside activities you enjoy. Take up a new outdoor hobby: bird watching, photography, geocaching, inline skating, sand art, bee keeping, metal detecting. Identify where you will go, when and for how long, and then buy in whatever gear you will need to make it possible to do independent of what the weather is doing. One person set themselves a simple goal of



walking a particular trail, another to visit the gardens of all the National Trust properties in their region.

- **Connect with others** Virtually: watch a film with someone else at the same time so you can chat about it during or after, play board games (Genius Square is one we recommend), have a quiz night where each person brings a round. Physically: where possible arrange to meet up with others for activities or conversation.

RESOURCES

- Join the New Wine Single Leaders Network [Facebook](#) group.
- [Single Minded](#), Kate Wharton (Monarch).

