



Living well, living differently

Seventeen years ago, I spent six months as a volunteer at a charity in Delhi. It was my first experience of living in a country with serious heat. One day in my lunch hour, I went out to post a letter: the post office was only half a mile away.

I had walked only about 200 metres when I noticed something; nobody else was out on the pavement walking anyway. 200 metres later, it dawned on me why. It was eye wateringly, sappingly hot. The sun beat down a venom to which I was not accustomed.

I got to the Post office just, but with periodic hiding in the shade, and I just about limped back to the office, but I didn't make that mistake again.

At times of extreme heat, one just has to live differently. The early morning hours are excellent. Then is the time to get out and about and do tasks; after that, you hide in the middle of the day: if you fancy a siesta, why not? Then from 5pm, you've got four gorgeous hours of daylight ahead. The point is, it's different from how you normally go about things. We're all learning this kind of lesson in this heat wave.

There was a report yesterday about levels of mobile phone usage. It was one of those reports that told us what we already know, which is that the British population use their mobiles an awful lot. Two out of every five adults have checked out their mobiles within five minutes of waking up in the morning and the average person will be on the phone, mostly the internet, for

two and a half hours each day.

There's nothing inherently wrong with the phone itself, but how to use it well is a challenge. It's easy to fritter away time on a Twitter feed. And, as with the heat, it's a challenge that many of us are not used to facing because it isn't something we grew up with.

To live well means living differently when circumstances are different.

Take the Anglican office of Morning Prayer. This is based on the worship pattern of monastic communities from the 6th Century onwards; it brings with it a sense of permanence and to say Morning Prayer each day is part of a priest's oath of canonical obedience. It's what you say come rain or shine, in heat or in cold.

But here's what has changed. Instead of using books, most of us now find Morning Prayer via, wait for it, our phones. And this isn't the preserve of the young and trendy priests. Yesterday, the colleagues reading the text of Morning Prayer from their phones were 60 and 71 years old respectively.

It's a good example of taking something new and making it work in a way that is ancient.

As life changes, old, successful ways of life may need to be reworked, but sometimes, the new ways are our allies rather than our foes.

August 2018, for the Train is a short column by the Reverend Robert Stanier, the vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train. You can also read "Thought for the Train" at www.surbitonchurch.org.uk.