

A dystopian future or a brave new world?

Robb Wainwright, Diocesan Lay Development Officer, considers how training can be delivered once the lockdown has ended

The work of the Lay Development Team is still under review, apart from the continuing Growing Hope conferences and delivery of the Coffee Morning Training Courses on Reading, Delivering Intercessions and Welcoming People into our Churches. Wherever we were with that review, the world is now a different place and normal is a word with very little shared meaning at the moment.

Life has changed and we have been pushed as never before into the realms of using technology for our interactions in a way which might have taken years, if not decades, to achieve otherwise. Prior to February 2020, I would never have thought that I would be delivering interactive services, of Morning Prayer and Sunday Eucharist, to my congregations by computer at any point before my retirement, but it has now been happening for several weeks.

My point, therefore, is: are we now, or will we soon be able, to deliver certain lay development training via electronic means rather than our usual and more traditional methods? The plusses are many: for example, less time taken for the training, no travelling which saves money and reduces pollution, and the ability to reach a wider more geographically diverse audience. There are downsides: there will be technical issues and there is less chance to interact as a group since we all join as individuals. There also needs to be a little more discipline in how the training is delivered and received but it is worth thinking about.

That just leaves the Lay Development Team itself. It, too, can learn from what is happening now. Meetings could also be conducted electronically, as least every alternate meeting. We will all still need to physically meet from time to time in order to get to know each other, unless we buy into the dystopian future imagined by Isaac Asimov in one of his *I, Robot* stories where all the humans on a world live on vast estates with no human interaction except by electronic means.

As our world and our perceptions of our world change, we too must change. In order to live and grow in our faith we have always needed to embrace change and that will continue as we strive to live in the knowledge and love of our God who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.