

The diary of a retired parson

A new, regular column by Revd Jonathan Copus



No flocculating

Screams of agony have been echoing round my village. Actually, they emanate from me. Nothing to do with the taxman, or another dreadful one-liner from Milton Jones. I've just given myself another shock. 20,000 volts, give or take a few thou.

Years ago I invented the world's first electronic antibiotic, which kills germs using a high voltage to generate a concentrated stream of electrically-charged air particles called ions. Yes, it is effective against viruses. But don't get too excited: it only works on your outsides.

Charging up air molecules, though, does have a current relevance (oh, haha). A friend of mine called Copy Laws, who lived in Hampshire with his son and an enormous ion meter, invented the domestic air ioniser, which immediately made a lot of money for other people. Unfortunately, they made exaggerated claims for its health benefits, and were ridiculed by scientists.



But some of those benefits are real. Airborne viruses don't just hang around tum-te-tumming: they hitch lifts in cough droplets. If you charge up the nearby air, these droplets *flocculate* or clump together, and then either fall to the floor or cling to the nearest wall, leaving fewer of the little bugs to get inside you. When I gave myself that shock, I was working on a super-powerful version to create a small safe haven for Mrs C and me.

Clumping together, however, is exactly what the Government want us not to do at the moment. Shots on the telly of Dyfed Powys Police shooing folk off Mwnt beach make the message clear: no flocculating.

Mrs C saunters into the lab. 'Didn't you hear me shout out just now?' I ask. 'I gave myself an almighty belt.'

'I heard,' she says. 'Here's your tea.'

It's five o'clock. I switch on the radio to listen to *PM*. Sipping my tea, I reflect how we're all a bit *in suspension* at the moment; how that, *charged* with loving our neighbour, we ought to be *coming together* – not literally, but by phoning, doing the shopping, just being there. Then I remember I'm retired, and not paid to think in sermons any more.

So I go back to tinkering with my electronic corner of the battlefield against the Unseen Enemy, only more carefully this time. A kilovolt is aptly named.

Along the bench, the radio is chanting the mantra: *stay safe, stay at home, wash your hands*.

But above all, don't flocculate.