

11 October 2020

Dear Friends of Elmwood,

Like many others, I find myself 'working from home' during the week much more than I used to do. We were admonished to do this when the pandemic first hit. I still do it. But I've missed my study at the Church and I've slowly migrated back there, dividing my time between Church and Home.

### **Home Work**

At home, I spread out papers and books on the dining room table, make phone calls with one hand, write in my notebook with another, and tap out sentences with the other hand on a cheap little laptop that loves to misbehave. (Wait, that's three hands...) I try not to disturb the sleeping cat, who also loves to misbehave. So do I, sometimes.

Working from home has its advantages. No need to shave first thing, when you're barely awake! And the kitchen is *right there*, beckoning. "Why not make yourself a snack?" it asks. But one big disadvantage is the way 'working from home' blurs the dividing line between our 'working' and 'not-working' lives. The former bleeds more and more into the latter.

I've been carrying some extra duties, lately, long ago downloaded onto me by the Presbytery. I want to say I feel the way Jeeves does when he's made to carry Bertie Wooster's steamer trunk while simultaneously mixing his favourite cocktail, ironing his shirts, whipping up a soufflé, and taking his messages.

"Jeeves, just carry that old thing up to the third floor, would you? There's a good chap."

"Very good, sir."

But the comparison is too grand.

My flurry of Presbytery work has consumed the hours I might have spent penning another little essay right here. I've stored up an idea to download on you too. Well, several. But they'll have to wait for another time.

Instead, for your amusement, edification, and/or immediate deletion, I offer you an excerpt from something by Stephen Fry (who, incidentally, used to play 'Jeeves' on T.V. opposite Hugh Laurie's 'Bertie Wooster').

In the late 1980s, he wrote a column for *The Listener*, a magazine the BBC used to publish. His editor demanded a fresh essay every week. Stephen Fry

fulfilled this task admirably, with characteristic wit and humour. But then, one week, he found he had nothing at all to say. Yet he still had to say something. (Clergy know this problem all too well.) So, he decided to write about *that*.

He titled his article "Absolutely Nothing At All". Here's a bit of it:

"For those of you who've never had to sit down on a weekly basis and provide 850 gleaming words of discursive prose for an imperious martinet of an editor who is expert with single-stick, fencing foil, field gun, and combat sarcasm, I may tell you that it isn't a breeze. A breeze is one of those things which it most specifically never is. It may be that you couldn't care a busman's burp what it is or isn't. "It can be a breeze," you reason, "or it can be a hurricane. Of what possible interest can that be to us? We pay good money for these words and we don't give a monkey's god-daughter what pain the production of them may cost.' I suppose you're right, damn you; you're hard but you have a very good point....But today nothing: nix, zilch, sweet zip dang-doodely zerosville Idaho. Tennis players have elbows, house-maids have knees, writers just have blocks...."

And so on. His editor told him, "Yes, I'll accept a column like this from you. *Once*."

### **In Other News**

John Goodson had to spend a few days in the hospital recently. He's now in Parkwood, and if all goes well, he'll be home again soon. So we pray. There has been a run on knee surgery lately. I forgot to mention that Harry Tenhaaf had his. May he soon regain his stride.

Yours in the faith,  
Andrew