

The Manse
Griminish
Benbecula
HS7 5QA
01870602180
07714937475
akuzma@churchofscotland.org.uk

2nd April, 2020

Benbecula and Carinish Pastoral Letter

Dear Church Family and Community Friends,

I have been reflecting on the current situation over the last couple of weeks and likely you have done the same on several occasions. I find that my most common reaction has been to pause several times throughout the day and take stock of things. This has often been followed by a moment of brief prayer for a situation or for someone. So many lives all around the world have been altered in some form as a result of Covid-19. I find myself saying thank you (to God and others) a lot more as I become more aware of the many blessings we enjoy in this place. I hope that you too have felt the encouraging and peaceful presence of the Lord of late in spite of present circumstances.

As I speak with folk from the churches and from the community one cannot help but notice the words being batted about...*unprecedented, changed days, challenging, self-isolating, social distancing*. I think we understand the gravity of our global situation and I have found most people quite calm and sensible in their approach to things. Having said that I still see that the shelves are empty of loo roll. 😊 If you are a bit anxious know that that too is ok. Jesus too was anxious in the garden on the night of His arrest. In these moments we look to a loving Heavenly Father as He did. For we need His peace and His will to be done. As much as we like to believe we are capable of dealing with everything in our own strength we are all too aware of our own weaknesses at times like these and our need of Him. If you do feel overwhelmed please do get in touch.

The last two Sundays have felt rather odd I must admit. It was lovely on one hand to spend the whole day with family but so bizarre to not gather as is our custom. We, like others, have sought to take in the various services on the radio, tv or online (when our internet allows). I was encouraged by the message of a friend who reminded me of John the disciple, the writer of Revelation. We see in Revelation 1.9-17 that John too was forced into isolation by a decree of banishment from Emperor Domitian to the isle of Patmos. He was there no doubt with other exiles, and though now considered quite a holiday destination, it was the ultimate punishment of severance from all community and family. So we find John on Patmos with no church, no comforts and little to no fellowship it would seem. Knowing this we read that John, who identifies himself as a 'brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance' stuck to the rhythm of life that was familiar. Verse 10 tells us that John "on the Lord's day I was in the Spirit". With no church to attend he 'did' church on his own and was in the Spirit, meaning he was

worshipping and spending time in the presence of God. Such a positive example of practicality in the face of trial. John, though exiled, still recognized he was part of the larger church and a brother to a great family indeed and did the best he could given the situation. And God met him in that place of solitude.

Another point that struck me in the passage was John tells us he was a 'companion in the suffering...and patient endurance' (verse 9). We don't often understand why things happen or are permitted to happen. God's ways are not our ways but we know he loves us enough to send His son for our salvation. John was exiled for doing the right thing - telling people about Jesus and I love that he focuses not on the circumstances of his situation but looks to the greater picture. This is captured in the '...patient endurance that are ours in Jesus' of verse 9. There is a patience that is demanded of us in the greater will and plan of God. John recognized it and we too must see the big picture of patient endurance. God is still sovereign, still Lord of all, still the God who pursues us with an everlasting love seeking to forgive and redeem us in and through Jesus. Be sure to be in Him and to wait and to rest...patiently endure this season.

So may we like John find in these days a new rhythm which allows us to meet with Him who never leaves us nor forsakes us. Particularly for those who stay on islands and cannot get to church. ☺ Be encouraged that there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes) and as such there is almost always an example from scripture to encourage and guide us. Others have made it through and so will we at some point God willing and in his strength

I recognize that not everyone is able to receive this electronically so please do feel free to pass this on to any and all who you feel may benefit. If there are others who would like to be kept in the loop please do let me know and pass me any other email addresses to copy in for further letters.

Please feel free to get in touch by phone, text or email should you feel the need to talk to wish to pass on any information. Also let me know of other who would wish to be included in future electronic correspondence. We have no clue how long this may last so please do let us know if you have any needs or know of others who require assistance.

I am trying to keep the facebook pages for Benbecula and Carinish Churches (links below) updated with info and resources and this is likely the easiest way to pass things on but I am aware this does not work for everyone so be sure and pass things along as you speak with one another.

Lastly, be assured of ongoing prayer for our churches in the islands, for our communities, nation, world and for our front line workers who are putting in a mammoth effort! May you all know His peace!

In Christ

Rev Drew Kuzma