

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

8th April, 2020

Benbecula and Carinish Pastoral Letter

Dear Church Family and Community Friends,

Hello again! May I begin by saying thank you for the various bits of feedback I have been receiving on numerous fronts. You are all to be commended for the many creative ways in which we are dealing with the current situation and still managing to look out for yourselves and one another! Very love your neighbor as yourself kind of stuff! Keep up the good work and as always if you need anything please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Well who could have foreseen the shape of Holy Week this year? To be honest the thought of no gatherings taking place in our churches is still something to get used to and yet we must get used to it. It is hard to believe that we will not be able to stand in each others company on Easter Sunday to declare aloud 'He Is Risen!'. I do hope that you are each settling in to some sort of routine for your days. Even with an established routine I still find myself climbing the walls a bit and I for one have been grateful for the reprieve from wind to get out for a little fresh air in the garden and enjoy the moments of peace and presence that He provides for us, as we wait and are renewed in His strength.

In the Gospel of John just prior to his arrest in chapter 18, Jesus prays. In the days leading up to his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus has been preparing his closest friends and disciples for what was to come. Chapter 17 begins with Jesus praying for himself, then his disciples and finally he prays for all believers including those yet to come like ourselves. Verse 20 *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* I find it incredible that roughly 2000 years ago Jesus was praying for us. Praying for us to be unified in Him for the purpose set before us - to reach a world in need of the salvation Jesus offers. Unity is of course a priority to the Trinity. It is a characteristic of the Trinity and as such it is a hallmark of the church. The unity of the body of Christ has endured the centuries and will continue to do so. Jesus prayed for us 2000 years ago and we are a testimony to His prayer as will be those who come after us. The unity found in Christ is not subject to time nor is it subject to space. This Friday and Sunday we may not be able to physically come together to proclaim our unity in Christ but we will still be one in Him. John 13.35 reminds us that our unity and our identity in Christ is primarily exemplified in our loving of one another. It marks us as ones who follow Jesus. It tells the world we belong to the bridegroom for we are part of the bride of Christ, the Church. We have likely

never had more opportunity to practically display that love to the world around us. If you are struggling with what you see, what you feel and what you hear, then may I encourage you to try and find another perspective in the midst of this season. That perspective is to look for the opportunities that present before us to love. To love as Jesus loved...selflessly, sacrificially, and in the knowledge that he was never alone and neither are we. We may very well be on our own come Sunday but please remember we enjoy a unity in Christ and in his Church that reinforces the promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. His presence is constant. It is my prayer that each home will know His peace, presence and love this weekend.

I would also like to take a moment to pass on some information. I am hoping to post a couple of short videos on Good Friday and Easter Sunday (God willing and internet co-operating!). These videos will be posted on the Facebook pages of both churches. I realize that not all are online or Facebook so please do share information as you chat with one another. Many of you have shared with me and others some of the services and links you have found; taking in services and tapping into devotions. Please do share these onward and if you are on Facebook do share the links for the benefits of others.

Over the last couple of weeks the Church of Scotland has been sending out information to address the various challenges that the lockdown has created. Many of you have had questions regarding finances and the means for ongoing giving. Thank you again for your faithfulness and patience. In light of that I offer some potential solutions in line with Head Office recommendations. The easiest option is perhaps that of internet banking. If you are banking online already then this may be the easiest option and would simply involved getting the church's account info and setting up a new payee. Another option would be to establish a standing order. Again you would need to speak to the appropriate treasurer and they will help you through the process. The third option at this point is to drop offering envelopes and gifts into newly installed locking post boxes at the respective church. The new post box in Clachan is located beside the defibrillator at the hall entrance. In Benbecula the new post box is located inside the church hall door and is mounted on the wall next to the Sunday Club cupboard. The last option of course involves travelling and we would ask that you observe the current guidelines deciding what and when travel is essential. Should you require further information regarding the above then please contact for Carinish Church, Tina Wakeling at 01876 560 232 and for Benbecula Church, Alasdair MacGillivray at 01870 602 240.

Please be assured of our prayers for you, our churches, our nation and our world thinking of those in particular risking so much to care for us. Please join us in daily lifting to the Lord those in need of strength, peace and healing.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen. Have a Happy Easter!

In Christ,
Rev Andrew Kuzma