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Benbecula and Carinish Pastoral Letter

Dear Church Family and Community Friends,

Greetings to one and all on yet another lovely spring day. I hope this letter finds each of you well. It still seems a bit surreal that we celebrated Easter each in our own homes. Let me just say thank you for the prayer that is being offered up and please be assured that we are praying for you all as well. Please continue to remember one another for we will each be in need of His strength at some point before the restrictions come to an end. But back to Easter. I was able to enjoy the sunrise out in front of the church and take in the beauty and stillness that the early morning affords. After recording a short video I was still pretty tired and was tempted to return to bed if I am honest, but I was captivated by what I heard as I waited for my video to upload. As I closed my eyes I was aware of the warmth of the rising sun, the bleating of day old lambs, the sound of swans feet on the loch, the noise of the starlings, the sound of flapping, the whistling of air over many different wings, the sounds of insects buzzing just to paint a bit of picture of one such occasion where Creation has so poignantly captured my attention over the last wee while. I have had a few such days where this has happened over the last couple of weeks as I have taken the time to stop and wait.

Waiting is something we are at times not fond of. Waiting for buses, an appointment letter, traffic lights (on the mainland), a caravan to get out of the way, for our confinement to end, to name a few such situations. We see waiting as an inconvenience at best. Yes of course we could bring up various offerings from the psalms that remind us of the benefits of waiting on the Lord, but we likely do not actually make a priority of waiting. If you do that is great and well done! However, if your experience has been anything like mine you will be able to pinpoint moments in your life where you know the Lord has forced a stop in the rhythm and routine of your life to get your attention and to have you wait. In those moments of forced waiting we often come to the realization that we were in need of something. Perhaps rest, maybe strength, maybe wisdom or direction was the reason for the pastoral arrest brought upon us and we were made to lie down in green pastures to restore our souls. We come to realize the waiting on the Lord was exactly what was needed to take us forward.

Though churches the world over were seen to be empty on Sunday with a bit of a smile I think so was the tomb. For 400 years Israel waited...for a Messiah. Following the death of Jesus the disciples waited...behind closed doors. Jesus then appeared for 40 days continuing to encourage, teach and minister. When he was due to ascend he commanded them in Acts 1 *'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.'* As Jesus took his place at the right

hand of the Father the disciples waited...for the Holy Spirit. Waiting, I believe is a good thing. Waiting is an opportunity. An opportunity to invest...in your own spiritual well-being and that of the church and community. Many of us have the blessing of some extra time on our hands right now. Can I be so bold as to ask us to use some of it to wait? Take time to wait upon the Lord for our own benefit but also for the benefit of others. Practically set aside time and simply say 'Lord, I wait upon you...please restore my soul' and then wait, and when you sense yourself to be 'topped up' (which may be minutes, hours or days and several such sessions) then begin to wait on behalf of others (church and community - having loved yourself you now look to loving your neighbor with that same level of care). Ask for example...What would you have me do when this is done Lord? Who can I encourage today Lord? What can I do for someone today? Who needs what I have to offer Lord? Then react accordingly and obey what you hear and then repeat.

The bible is full of accounts where the rug gets pulled out from under someone's feet only to reveal an opportunity for the Lord to do something amazing! The Red Sea, Paul in prison, Jesus in a tomb are a few such examples. We have before us, I believe, an opportunity in the midst of our lockdown to pray and to wait. Yesterday we heard the announcement that we have before us a few more weeks of lockdown to endure. Our new routines are becoming a bit more established but may I encourage us all to pencil in some time to wait and to see what the Lord would do and say. Let us take a page out of Jesus book for he waited often and regularly on the Father to do what he needed to do.

I hope and pray that the Lord may bless and keep each of you and that you will each encounter him in this challenging time. May His peace and presence restore each of us as we wait and encounter Him. May we each grow closer to the Lord and look for ways to serve Him, one another and our communities in the midst of our situation.

Please continue to pray for our frontline workers who are doing a great job of keeping essential services running. Also, remember the various leaders who have the task of making difficult decisions that impact the populations of so many nations. This week I have had on my heart the plight of those without the healthcare provision we enjoy. So many millions make do without. Remember those mourning and affected. Please join me in praying for these concerns and so many others.

His kingdom come, His will be done...

In Christ

Rev Andrew Kuzma