

Laurieston Church
Charity Number: SCO07383
Redding & Westquarter Church
Charity Number: SCO08787



Easter Letter 2020

My Own Dear People

That is how Rev Walter M Reid used to address his pastoral letters to the people of East Kilbride Old Parish Church where I grew up as a child and teenager in the 1960s and 1970s. I don't remember any of the sermons he preached (I do remember counting the organ pipes and the panes on the stained glass windows when I got particularly bored), but I do remember these words and the genuine warmth and love that lay behind them. It seemed an appropriate way to begin my last Easter letter to all of you in Laurieston, Redding and Westquarter, written under circumstances that none of us could have imagined even a few weeks ago.

Sitting in my living room, it is hard to believe that there is a deadly, invisible threat all around: one whose effects will become very much worse before they get better, one which prevents us meeting for worship and the spiritual and pastoral support that we need now more than ever, and which may well result in my moving into retirement without having had the chance to say a proper, face-to-face goodbye. If that does happen, I will most certainly come back when it is safe to do so - if only for the tea and cakes that I am not supposed to know about!

I am writing this on Sunday morning. At 10 o'clock, when I would normally have been rushing to Laurieston Church, trying to beat the bells, I sat down with the Roll of both churches to check through members' names and addresses, and at the same time thought of each of you in turn. If that's the same as praying, then I did that too.

For practical reasons, because I am having to print this out at home and send it by post, I am not writing to absolutely everybody, just those who usually attend worship or who used to and no longer can, but if you know of anyone who has been missed out and would like a copy, please let me know and I will put that right. I can be reached by email: jmary.henderson@churchofscotland.org.uk

At 11 o'clock I tuned in to the live worship coming from Brightons Church on their Youtube channel, which you can find via the church website: www.brightonschurch.org.uk. In fact, the minister, Scott Burton, was in his living room as his daughter, Hope, has a bit of a cough and he is self-isolating. Several of the bigger churches, who have the necessary equipment, are sending out live worship on the internet, and taking requests for prayer and practical help. Sanctuary First (www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk) offers daily worship and other resources, and the Church of Scotland website (www.churchofscotland.org.uk) includes a video message from the Moderator, Rt. Rev. Colin Sinclair.

Laurieston Bowling Club has taken the initiative in reaching out to the local community and co-ordinating support for vulnerable people, which includes many of our church members. You will probably had a flier through your door before this letter arrives. You can find out more on the community support page of their website: www.lauriestonbowlingclub.com/community. If you

don't have internet access, and need help, for example with shopping or medical supplies, you can phone or text the co-ordinator using the contact details given on their site.

If you need pastoral support or just want someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to phone me or one of the elders. We can't come to visit, but we need to support each other now more than ever, and phone calls are one way in which that can happen. If you have a death in the family, sadly it looks as though only a very basic committal will be able to take place until this crisis is past: a small number of the close family at the graveside or crematorium. If that happens, then you will be able to have a service of thanksgiving in the church when it is safe to do so.

And now, perhaps most importantly, what sort of hope and assurance do we find in our Christian faith at times like this, when the world we thought we knew has changed beyond recognition, when we are cut off from everyone we know and love, when the future is completely unknown and our very lives are in danger? Well, not the easy promises that you find in some of the psalms, a simplistic theology that was challenged and debunked in the book of Job, when trouble came on someone who had done nothing to deserve it. This virus is no respecter of persons: it cannot tell good people from bad, Christians from Moslems or atheists or Jews.

Our faith will not protect us from sickness and death. In this season of Lent, as we think of the terrible suffering that Jesus endured, despite his fervent prayers in Gethsemane, why on earth should we think that we would be spared from the troubles that are part of being human? What we do find in our faith is the assurance that no matter what happens to us, we do not have to face it alone. Christ has been there before us; God is with us in it. Even if we are deprived of human company and touch - a terrible loss, even for an introvert like me, who is happy in her own company - we are not alone. God is with us. God knows and he cares.

I hope - and pray - that all of you will stay safe and keep well, but if the worst happens, and you become ill, even if that illness is life-threatening, there is nothing to fear. The message of Easter is that death has been defeated. Love has done battle with it, and come out victorious. I love the words of Desmond Tutu, and hold on to them in the face of all evidence to the contrary:

**GOODNESS IS STRONGER THAN EVIL;
LOVE IS STRONGER THAN HATE;
LIFE IS STRONGER THAN DARKNESS;
LIFE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH.
VICTORY IS OURS; VICTORY IS OURS
THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US.**

Enclosed with this letter are some prayers and readings that you may find helpful; also some suggestions for a very simple form of worship for the next few Sundays. If we each use them at the time when we would have been in church (10 o'clock in Laurieston; 11.30 in Redding and Westquarter) then we will be worshipping together even though we are apart.

This comes with my love and prayers, and my profound thanks for your friendship and support over the past 11 years.

From your friend and minister

Mary Henderson