

15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Friends,

I reflect that over the last weeks as I have been writing these letters, I have been asking you how you are doing, when maybe a better question would be how you are being. How is it with your heart soul and mind? How are you sustaining your faith and walk of discipleship? Is it a struggle, or are you finding these strange times somewhat releasing? I spoke to someone yesterday who was reflecting that they were enjoying the enforced slower pace of life, people are smiling at one another, and the enforced queueing in our supermarkets and other stores makes it more likely that people will chat to others in the queue. Of course, none of that takes away the underlying anxiety that there is a deadly virus out there, and we cannot see it or know where it is, we don't even know if we ourselves are asymptomatic! With the lockdown being eased over the next few weeks, how are you feeling? I will openly admit that I am feeling anxious, and know that others are too, it must be such a difficult time to be in government, and while it is easy to criticise and say things should have been done differently they are what they are, and we have to live with that, while following the call to speak out for justice, for those for whom life is very difficult and poverty and social exclusion mean that they are at risk on a daily basis.

So how do we live out our faith at this time and be the kind of people that Jesus called us to be? Perhaps the first thing is to recognise that we are not alone, that we hold onto Jesus promise that in him and through the indwelling Holy Spirit we find in God all that we need, including the wisdom for how to respond as we interact with one another, as we take in the news, as we respond to what is happening in the world. Here are some of Jesus words as he turned to face the way to the cross, they bring both challenge and comfort:

### *The Spirit of Truth*

*15-17 "If you love me, show it by doing what I've told you. I will talk to the Father, and he will provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world cannot take him in because it does not have eyes to see him, does not know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you and will even be in you!"*

*18-20 "I will not leave you orphaned. I am coming back. In just a little while the world will no longer see me, but you are going to see me because I am alive, and you are about to come alive. At that moment you will know absolutely that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you."*

*21 "The person who knows my commandments and keeps them, that's who loves me. And the person who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and make myself plain to him."*

How do you respond the words of Jesus? I see both a comfort and a challenge here, the challenge is to live in the way that Jesus lived, runs alongside the promise that we will not and do not do that alone, we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us and will give us wisdom and insight and the ability to live through what may feel like very difficult circumstances. The best thing is that the Spirit does not come to us when we get it right, but dwells in us so that we can! Here is how St Paul puts it:

*Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them—living and breathing God. (Romans 8)*

As we walk with the story of God in these days between Easter and Pentecost we share in the waiting time of the disciples, and we are also caught up in a waiting time, taking each day as it comes, with so much talk about the "New Normal" around we can only wait, will we be changed forever, I think the answer must be yes, and what will that mean for us as individuals and us as a church? Right now, I think it is too early to begin to speculate, so we must simply wait and pray.

Once again, I will say please call me or email me if you want to talk, I know that you are doing a fantastic job of looking after one another, and others around you, and I know that you will continue to do that. I will leave you with a meditation of mine a picture, and a hymn.

### Awakening.

I am God's dwelling place,  
the one who holds the end  
from the beginning has chosen me,  
to set the fire of life alight in me!

I am God's dwelling place,  
within me love is calling  
for love's response, wooing me  
awake, stirring my soul,  
calling me, yes me!

I am God's dwelling place,  
open to Divine possibilities,  
eternal mysteries, part of a  
larger story than my own.

I am God's dwelling place,  
the impossible made possible,  
healing grace flowing wild and free....

I am God's dwelling place....  
You are God's dwelling place. ..

*Come down, O love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.*

*O let it freely burn, 'til earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
And let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.*



*Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,  
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;  
True lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler  
part,  
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.*

*And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will  
long,  
shall far out-pass the power of human telling;  
For none can guess its grace, till they become the  
place  
where-in the Holy Spirit finds a dwelling.*

Many blessings

*Sally Owen*