

## ***Pastoral Letter from our Minister***



*Dear friends*

As I write this, we are three months into lockdown, with things just beginning to ease, and many of our accustomed freedoms still not available to us. It has been an unprecedented time. Over the weeks this time has been compared to wartime in the necessity for us all to pull together. However, in wartime we were able to be physically present with one another in fighting the enemy, whether that enemy was danger from bombing or hunger or keeping the wheels of society turning while many were abroad fighting. This is very different, and none of us have ever experienced anything like it. Pulling together, in this context, means staying apart. Saving lives, in this context has meant doing nothing - not going to the shops, not going to the cinema, not going to the pub or restaurant, not even going to the beach or a walk in the country.

***In the present situation, community has come to mean something very different.*** For some of us, we have developed online communities, and Zoom is a word that has entered our vocabulary in a way we would never have imagined at beginning of March. For others, we have relied on phone calls, family members, neighbours calling to us over the fence, seeing people but at a distance.

***There has been real grief for many of us.*** The grief of not being able to see our loved ones, or even if we could see them, not been able to hold them. The grief of not being able to be with a loved one in their last hours, and not being able to honour their life in community as we normally would. The grief of having our lives, our normal lives, taken away from us overnight and having to find new ways to communicate.

***There has also been hardship.*** Some lost their livelihood overnight. Others have been trapped in situations where they do not feel safe, whether that is at home or at work, if they are key workers.

***It has indeed been a difficult time and an unprecedented time.***

***But there have also been blessings.*** Technology has been a blessing in this time, enabling us to stay connected, enabling us to continue to worship. Time, for some, has been a blessing. Time to do all those chores that were piling up. Time to read that book, do that jigsaw. Time to chat on the phone, to face time. Time to spend with some of our loved ones without feeling the pressure of other things needing to be done.

***And the weather of course has helped.*** And much more difficult this would have been if the weather had been cold and miserable.

***And in all of this, where is God? God is talking with us, rejoicing when we rejoice, and weeping when we weep.*** In a situation like this we discover with a fresh reality that the point of Jesus is that he is, "Immanuel, God with us."

*Your friend and minister,*

*Jane*