

Hello everyone

Are you excited? It seems that slowly we are to emerge from lockdown. No longer will wondering whether my liquorice seeds have germinated or not be the sole focus of my life. Now there will be bigger ideas to ponder once more like whether I walk or drive to Tesco. How have you been getting on? back in March we were told we had to stay indoors, where did you seek inspiration to survive and flourish during this time?

Right back on day one I was given a poem which has helped me focus my thoughts not just on how to live the isolated life, but what to consider as we prepare once more wander outside once more looking for crowds – our hosts of daffodils.

No it wasn't Wordsworth's famous lines, it was called Pandemic by Lynn Unger

It starts:

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider Sabbath-

The most sacred of times?

And later in the poem she continues her advice.

Reach out your hearts

Reach out your words

Reach out all the tendrils of compassion

That move, invisibly,

Where we cannot touch.

Promise the world your love-

For better or for worse

In sickness and in health

So long as we all shall live.

Reach out your hearts, reach out your words.

Promise the world your love.

And we've certainly heard plenty of stories of people doing just that over the last few months.

But now we are poised for change once more. We are likely to be allowed to play golf and meet other people.

But change will come slowly. We are reminded that the speed of change will depend on us and how we react to our new freedoms as we work to keep COVID 19 at bay.

Promise the world your love seems a very good way of expressing our first steps along this new path we are all to travel.

A sabbath day's journey nears its completion, it seems.

Remember that a sabbath days' journey is just what the disciples undertook once Jesus had left them, Luke tells us about it at the start of his second book- the acts of the apostles.

Before he ascended, he ordered them to wait for the promise of the Holy spirit before they left Jerusalem.

And they did that. It took them a whole Sabbath day's journey to get back to Jerusalem from the mount of Olivet. When they got there, they went immediately to the upper room and devoted themselves to prayer.

That's our job too, not just at times of great promise like easing of the lock down or only at times of anxiety as the church of Scotland grapples with the next steps in our radical action plan, but at all times.

As we prepare to emerge back into the world, we need to be like the disciples and take time so sit with God in prayer. Conversation with God is never wasted. He wants to know how we are feeling. He wants to know how we are getting on. He wants to know who and what we miss.

And so prayer is especially important and appropriate at this time. On Sunday we will celebrate the feast of Pentecost- often called the birthday of the church.

It's one of the great celebrations of the church Year; possibly second only to Easter day itself.

So it does seem a very opportune week to celebrate quietly and sensibly our first steps out of lockdown. That's a horrible phrase isn't it? In my mind lockdown, is associated with punishment in

American TV prison dramas, rather than  
Banchory's COVID-19 defeating rural setting.

Remember this is no prison we are being released  
from, this has been a time of traveling the Sabbath  
journey. The reflective journey of preparation and  
appreciation.

For some it has been a sad grieving time, for others  
maybe a lonely or frustrating time, but I suspect  
for all it has been a time to think.

We've taken a Sabbath day's journey to God. For a  
short time, we gave up physical traveling, we  
reduced our selling and buying and committed  
ourselves to keeping as safe as we could all who  
we share this world with.

Once the holy spirit came, the disciples started to  
travel. Small steps at first just outside their house  
into their community to share and discuss what  
they had discovered through devoting their selves  
to prayer.

So as we take our first steps back into our  
communities we should,

As we travel and start to buy and sell once more,  
continue to promise this world our love.

For better, for worse

In sickness and in health

So long as we all shall live.

And continue to support our new way of living  
through prayer. If you don't know where to start  
with prayer, try the Thy Kingdom come  
programme that runs for a few days around  
Pentecost. It's a series of short videos and  
reflective readings to focus your minds in prayer.  
Enter 'Thy kingdom come 2020' into your web  
browser and you will find it.

Or you can download the mobile app from the  
normal app stores.

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The disciples devoted themselves to prayer,  
together with certain women, including Mary the  
Mother of Jesus, as well as Jesus' brothers.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were filled  
with the Holy Spirit.

Peter standing outside with the eleven addressed  
the crowd.

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What if we took that attitude out into each new  
day from now on?

How different would the world be?

Peace be with you.

Amen