

SUNDAY GREETINGS FROM THE MINISTER

19TH APRIL 2020

Posted on April 19, 2020 by Andrew Brown

Greetings to you all,

As in previous weeks, during my telephone calls to various members of the congregation, I have been asked by many of you to send their love and best wishes on to one and all; it is something which, of course, I'm delighted to be able to do.

As most of you are aware, I have had to come to London with Susanna to help look after her daughter and this has meant I haven't been able to call as many of you as I would have liked during the last two weeks. My apologies for that. However, I will carry on calling as and when I am able and, if I have called you in the last week and a half, I look forward to catching up with you soon. Naturally, should any of you need to talk about **anything** please feel free to call me on my mobile (number below) and, if I don't answer immediately, please do leave me a quick message and I'll get back to you as soon as I am able.

Not surprisingly, I also haven't been able to write anything new for you this Sunday but it strikes me that an address I gave back in July 2018 entitled "*Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure*"—*letting 'fellow suffering' go and encouraging 'fellow rejoicing'* might have some useful resonances in the situation in which we all find ourselves. One in which, in one way or another, we are all being called to show compassion to one another.

But, as an all-embracing concept, compassion (suffering-with) has long seemed to me to some serious limitations, not least of all something that has been called 'compassion-fatigue', and so there exists an argument that what we need is another (or at least an additional) way of understanding how to be with each other that allows us to find appropriate, supportive, uplifting and hope-generating ways to be rejoicing together -- something that needs to happen even during our darkest of our days. For example, here in London with Susanna's family, even as we are all

trying our best compassionately to walk together with Lu through her final days, moments of rejoicing regularly come along as, for example, the two grandchildren play silly games around us or when we are prompted by something or other to remember and relive in the present all kinds of pleasurable moments from our shared life together. And these things genuinely help us all, including Lucy, immeasurably. Again and again we are made aware that compassion alone is simply not enough.

Anyway, it seems to me that what is true in my own personal circumstances, is equally true in our own, current, shared circumstances as we all continue to seek ways to walk together through the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, too, compassion alone is simply not enough.

So, for what it's worth -- and, as always, only should you be minded to read it -- here's a link to that address:

Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure"—letting 'fellow suffering' go and encouraging 'fellow rejoicing'

<https://andrewjbrown.blogspot.com/2018/07/stranger-here-you-will-do-well-to-tarry.html>

Lastly, I hope all will continue as well as it can for all of you in the coming week and that, now and then, you are able to find your own, occasional, but nevertheless real and genuinely sustaining, moments of rejoicing-with. In my imagination and heart I will be rejoicing with you.

Love and best wishes as always,

Andew

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