

Dear Friends

For those of us who were planning to take a holiday this summer, things are now looking very different. We may be waiting for a refund from a travel company, have rearranged our break for later in the year or next year, be waiting to see when it might be possible to make a booking, or have decided not to go ahead with a holiday at all this year. Richard and I were due to travel to France, but this is clearly not now possible, so my annual leave will consist of a staycation in the manse, with perhaps a few short day trips.

Even if holidays aren't possible at the moment, it's important that we can find something that refreshes us, that brings something different into our lives at a time when every day can feel to be the same. For some of us that may have happened over the past couple of weeks, when we've been able to meet up with family and friends, even if outside and at a safe distance. For others, it may be the chance to venture out for the first time in weeks, to go a little bit further than the garden. Others of us have enjoyed a new hobby or revisited an old one. Along with many other people, I've rediscovered baking and even though some of my efforts have been more successful than others, it's been good to be able to do something that I've neglected for some time.

I've also been enjoying reading poetry. One of my favourite poets is Wendell Berry. You may not have heard of him; I hadn't until I went on a retreat a few years ago and was introduced to his work. Berry, now aged 85, is a farmer, environmentalist and writer from Kentucky, whose poetry is inspired by his deep reverence for the land. He describes himself as 'a person who takes the Gospel seriously' and believes that 'essential wisdom accumulates in the community'. One of his poems begins 'I go among trees and sit still', which is somewhere I have found myself on many occasions recently – those words and words from Psalm 46 'Be still and know that I am God' have spoken to me through this difficult time for all of us.

I want to finish by quoting a short poem of Berry's – it's only four lines, but they have a depth within them, I think, that can speak to us at this time:

*'To go in the dark with a light is to know the light.*

*To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight,*

*And find that the dark, too, blooms and sings,*

*And is travelled by dark feet and dark wings'.*

We may have felt to be in a dark place many times over the last few months; it's my hope and my prayer that we have been able to find solace in whatever situation we have found ourselves.

May we all have hope and peace in our lives today and into the future.

With my best wishes

Sue