

Dear Friends,

Well, this is a strange and surreal time! Who could have imagined, as we were enjoying Christmas, that we would be facing an Easter 'lock-down' deprived of close contact with family and friends. And for how much longer – who knows?

National emergencies often bring out the best and the worst in people. Last week, I read in the newspaper that some people had deliberately coughed in the face of police, shouting 'We've given you COVID-19' – I thought how unbelievably vicious and cruel. The darkness in our world, revealing itself.

And then, an amazing thing happened at 8pm on Thursday 26 March when, as a nation, we came together and applauded the NHS. It was a clear, starry night and I remember walking to the front gate, banging my saucepan with a metal spoon, listening to the cheers and applause from all around the neighbourhood. It was uplifting – there was recognition and thanks – but more importantly, there was HOPE. The light always overcomes the darkness.

As Lent draws to its close and we approach Holy Week – let us be mindful of Christ's physical and mental suffering, as so many throughout the world, are suffering physically and mentally. As Good Friday comes, as it surely will, let us be mindful of Christ's horrific torture and death, as so many throughout the world continue to suffer and to die today in terrible circumstances. And in the loneliness and desolation after that first Good Friday, let us be mindful of all those coping today with loneliness and desolation throughout the world.

Perhaps, weather permitting, late on Holy Saturday night, when I would normally be heading off to sing in the choir of St Mary and St Nicholas Church in Wilton for the first Service of Easter, I will, instead, light a little fire in my garden, take a new, white candle, light it from the fire and bring the lighted candle into my home.

*The light of Christ – Thanks be to God!*

No doubt the neighbours will think I've gone completely daft – but then, they're used to me!!

In the certainty of the risen Christ on that first, glorious Easter morning, let us be **Confident** that we will overcome this pandemic; let us be **Confident** that the light of Christ will illuminate our world and let us be full of **HOPE** that we, the people of the world, will emerge from all of this, more compassionate, more loving, and more appreciative of one another.

Be strong, my friends. Take good care. Keep well, Keep safe and Keep smiling!

My love and prayers to you all this Easter,

Rosie

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!