

DIOCESE OF MORAY, ROSS & CAITHNESS



MOST REVEREND MARK STRANGE BISHOP OF MORAY, ROSS & CAITHNESS: PRIMUS OF THE SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

24th December 2020

Dear Friends across the Diocese

I seem to have spent hour after hour filming, writing and recording Christmas messages and sermons for so many organisations and churches. Today I am writing to you the Diocese of Moray, Ross and Caithness.

I am writing to you with my Christmas Greetings and with my thanks for all you have been doing in the past year. No one could have possibly anticipated the effects of Coronavirus would have upon us all and I believe we have managed to sustain and in places grow far more than I could have hoped.

I know that by all means possible people have received the comfort of the church, digital, hand written, telephone, weekly sermons, newsletters. I know just how hard your clergy and lay ministers have worked. There has also been a weekly or twice weekly Provincial service in which this Diocese has played its part. The Cathedral has live streamed all its worship including Morning and Evening Prayer and many of our churches have live streamed and recorded inspirational services filled with messages of hope. I know of Zoom worship at which people who have long since left the Highlands have been able to reconnect and I have experienced the joy of those who have come together for face to face worship.

It all sounds wonderful, but it comes at a cost. Your clergy need a break, many have struggled to get away at all this year and I know too well the pressure of always being at home and therefore always available. I have sadly also heard criticism that is just so unkind. If you haven't heard from someone for a while don't assume they are not doing their job, rather assume they are snowed under, give them a call to see how they are.

The most wonderful moments have often been from unexpected letters saying thank you and are you okay?

Therefore be kind to each other, offer to help when help is needed and don't be too critical of people who are doing their best.

This Christmas will be very different from what we are used to, or even what we expected up until till last weekend, but it will still be Christmas. Celebrate the birthday of Jesus and offer worship and prayer wherever you find yourself. There will be Provincial services online and from the Cathedral, some will be able to meet in church while others will join through television and computer.

So please keep a faithful Christmas and a loving Christmas. Keep those around you safe and continue to work for justice and peace at home and abroad.

Above all offer thanks to God who walks with us in good times and bad and who offers us a home in his heavenly kingdom.

A blessed Christmas to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Mark Morrey: Primus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a plus sign at the beginning.