



Dear children,

Let me please start this letter by thanking you all. This has been such a difficult time for all of us, but the way this pandemic has affected children and young people is easily forgotten. You have done so much to change the way you live to help control the virus and keep those more vulnerable to the virus safe. I know that the way school has changed has caused a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty for all of you, but you've kept going and I hear from our schools so many stories of how hard you are still working and, more importantly, being so kind to one another. You have been an inspiration to me in difficult days.

Although there is now hope on the horizon with the coming of a vaccine, we are about to have a Christmas that will be very different from any before. My dog Bracken has been making the best of the situation by inventing a new game which gives him hours of fun. He likes to steal the baby Jesus from our nativity and then hare around the flat with him until we manage to catch Bracken and rescue Jesus from being chewed! We are all having to make new plans, maybe you won't be able to see all the people you would normally see. Please remember if you find this all very stressful; that is okay and it is always good to talk to someone about how you feel, we all feel worried or sad at times and it is very normal to do so. A phrase you hear a lot at Christmas is "Comfort and Joy" and I pray you will find that this year through all the mess.

It is funny that the first people to hear the Christmas message of comfort and joy were a group of shepherds who heard it from the angels telling them about Jesus' birth. These were poor men who lived in the fields with the sheep in a country that was ruled harshly by the Romans. I wonder if they thought that message would mean that someone was going to kick the Romans out or they would get better jobs? God's plan was different. In Jesus he came to be with people in all the mess of a stable, but also in all the mess of our lives. The wonder of Christmas is it reminds us that in all the mess that is happening now, Jesus is still with us and he still brings comfort and joy.

When I last wrote to you, I said that you could send me an email and that I would pray for you. I want you to know that you still can. Lots of you did and I was very privileged to be able to pray for you. If you want to, please pray for me too. Being a Bishop can mean dealing with some difficult things and I would be very grateful if you asked God to help me and give me wisdom.

I hope you have a very happy Christmas and I pray that you would experience the comfort and joy that God gave us through Jesus.

Bishop Sarah