

A COMFORT TO EXPLORE

"Are you still a practising Minister?" asked my friend Alison (real name withheld). "I have been practising for nearly thirty years and despite now being retired, I hope to 'get it right' some day!"

Why do you ask?" came my reply. Alison went on to request that I conduct her Funeral Service when the time came.

The conversation then became serious when I discovered that her diagnosis and prognosis were giving her cause for anxiety and so, living near her, I called regularly as did my wife, to talk and pray with her. It was on one such occasion that she produced the EXPLORE booklet by GOOD NEWS for Everyone! and asked if I knew the man who had been offering it round the doors of homes in Ayrshire's Irvine Valley. "Yes, Adrian is a friend of mine and I'm so glad that you accepted this wonderful booklet – what do you make of it?" Alison spoke of the comfort she had found while reading through its pages in the preceding few weeks. I spoke with her of the way that Dr Luke had a heart for the poor, marginalised and anxious and how wonderfully he had fleshed out his account of Jesus' birth, life of service, death and resurrection. I asked her to keep reading.

On my return visit, I asked if she had reached pages 78 and 79 and how she had responded to the message that God loves us, that we are sinners in need of a Saviour and that God has a plan to save us, adding that when we respond to the invitation to repent and trust Christ

as Saviour and Lord, He does indeed forgive, make new and fill us with His Spirit. I spoke of the peace He gives and the strength and hope He places within us so that death and what lies beyond hold no fear for the child of God. She agreed she was ready to pray the little Prayer of Commitment on page 79 and so I prayed it with her.

Alison began to speak of the peace she had found and carried on doing so on subsequent visits. She went on to say she had three great hopes: to survive until Christmas, to die at home without pain or anxiety and to be at peace. The Lord kindly granted all three wishes – the final being the greatest, for she died in the peace that only Christ can bring.

It was a (sad) honour to conduct her well-attended funeral and to be able to speak of the peace she had found by trusting Christ. I invited Adrian to read the Scriptures from the very booklet which had been such a blessing to her. Because Alison had always loved Christmas, Adrian read of the Angels' visit to the shepherds of Bethlehem. I based my message on these great Gospel words in Luke 2: "fear not", "good news", "great joy" and "peace". How good to know that Alison found the peace that passes all understanding and now enjoys eternal peace in Christ's nearer presence."

Rev George Lind (semi) retired Minister of the Church of Scotland, who kindly sent in the testimony, is pictured with Adrian, who delivered the Explore booklet.

