



### **The Christmas Letter – John N. Morris**

Wherever you are when you receive this letter  
I write to say we are still ourselves  
in the same place  
and hope you are the same.

The dead have died as you know  
and will never get better,  
and the children are boys and girls  
of their several ages and names.

So in closing I send you our love  
and hope to hear from you soon.  
There is never a time  
like the present. It lasts forever  
wherever you are. As ever I remain.

## Favourite Christmas Poem cont.

### Reflections on 'The Christmas Letter' by John N Morris

I am so very tempted to send this poem out with my Christmas cards, it so sardonically encapsulates many Round Robin letters received at this time of year. It does also occur to me, however, that in this strange time of not having seen friends and family for so long, there is something reassuring about *I write to say we are still ourselves / In the same place*, and there is also a whisper of anxiety in *And hope you are the same*.

The next verse also speaks to the losses we have all experienced over the last eighteen months (even if only vicariously), juxtaposed with the gloriously generalised *And the children are boys and girls / Of their several ages and names*. The fun being poked at the way letters often chatter

about children we have never met, may never meet, suddenly also becomes a reminder that alongside what may seem a very bleak time, the world turns, children are born and grow, the balance is redressed.

The platitudes of the last verse become almost poignant in the way the line break after *There is never a time* changes the timbre of those words. Do the last two lines become mysterious, a promise of continuity and eternal friendship, or just a meaningless nod to a commitment barely maintained by the annual communication in a card and many times duplicated letter?

Writing this poem in 1977, I doubt whether John N Morris intended half of what I now read into it, but isn't that the mark of a real poem, that it speaks beyond its time and context?

*Beth Soule*