

# The Longest Day of the Year



The clerics stood  
commanding, demanding, unending  
the old walls stood  
supporting, surrounding, upstanding.

The lonely figure stood  
courageously, stoically, outrageously  
with pride and honour and defiance.

No cleric there who defined reliance  
but the people stood around those walls  
and these people stood whilst the last bell tolls.

The ancient stones echoed yearning and learning  
the lonely figure stood bravely discerning  
whilst the clerics stood  
so unconcerned  
as if it were a place where no one ever learned.

The people sat around those walls  
engrossed, engaged whilst the last bell tolls  
the children sat and ran and went  
where many more had childhood spent.

The lonely figure presided there  
proud and willing, always giving  
a stalwart ever there.

The cold breeze blew around those walls  
of the lonely church yonder  
the ghosts of ancient elders wander  
the crickets darted aimlessly through gable cracks  
the birds sang joyously, unknowingly above the people.

Whilst the lonely figure stood  
in the eye of the storm  
on the longest day of the year.

**Jean McQuade** is a civil servant who has loved writing poetry for years

She writes:

*This poem is about my very dear friend who had lost a major battle with hierarchy in a place she loved and invested her soul. The poem was about the closing down, literally on the longest day of the year, surrounded by the community – and the hierarchy, who had no soul.*