# KIRK NEWS LIGHT

Issue No 2 - MAY 2020



#### FROM OUR MINISTER



This letter is coming to you at a very strange time in our lives with the Covid-19 lockdown, and perhaps my absence from church has been almost forgotten with everything that has happened recently! However, I am really pleased to share with you that with the support of my incredible wife, loving family, supportive church, exceptional health care workers and — most of all — the goodness and grace of God, I am now feeling much more like myself and ready to begin a 'phased return'. So, it is time to fill you in a bit on the last few months and to say a big warm 'hello' again to you, wonderful church family.

For those who don't

know, I went through a burnout/breakdown towards the end of 2019. I have always had such sympathy for those suffering with poor mental health and have helped and supported others through such struggles. Nonetheless, going through it myself has been a different thing entirely.

I felt bruised and broken, and unable to continue doing the role I felt so strongly called to. In stepping back, I felt like a failure. I locked myself away from almost everyone, but this was also accompanied by a deep sadness at not seeing you all. One of the reasons I couldn't face seeing people was guilt. I felt that I was letting you down by taking time off to get better, and thought the church would feel cheated by hiring a 'faulty minister'. (Perhaps the CofS could take a leaf out of Amazon's book, as it seems there is no warranty or returns policy if a minister malfunctions too soon!)

Thankfully, the Lord has been working on taking away my fears, anxieties and hurts. He promises us in Isaiah 42:3 that "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out". He is tender and gentle with us when we are fragile, and works to put broken people back together in ways that will show His glory and serve His kingdom. I trust and pray that as God has pieced me back together he has done so in a way that has changed me for His glory. If nothing else, He has certainly shown me why I absolutely need to rely on His strength and not my own! I'm sure that in time I will be able to share more of this journey that God has taken my heart on, but

for now, I can say I am back on my feet because of the goodness and mercy of the Holy Spirit.

However, in what is almost comedic timing, now that I feel ready to get back to normal, the whole world has gone into lockdown! My phased return will take place during this odd time we find ourselves in, with all the restrictions and uncertainty. So, for now, I will be doing ministry related work two days per week and this will slowly increase over the next couple of months.

Lastly, Debbs and I want to say a heartfelt thank you for the kind words, cards, prayers, and practical support the church family has provided for us during this period – it really has made such a difference. I also cannot say thank you enough to Colin for all he has done in leading worship and providing pastoral care during my absence, to John and Ann as session clerk and deputy session clerk for keeping things running, to Bob Anderson who has filled in as interim moderator, and to all the many others who have stepped up during this time.

I really look forward to catching up with you all as time goes on (although I regret not being able to give hugs when we do meet!).

In the meantime, please do keep safe, look out for each other, and know that God is with you every moment of every day. He has certainly been with me every step of the way – He is faithful and his love never ends.

Blessings, Seòras

Welcome 'back', Seòras!

# **EASTER PARADE** A LITTLE TASTE OF CHURCH FAMILY CELEBRATING THE JOY OF EASTER



















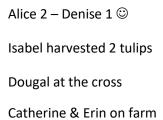
















Margaret McInnes is still working, supporting Step by Step families on-line, helping them to help each other, emotionally and mentally, as well as accessing and channelling physical aid to those in real need during this worldwide pandemic. Margaret shared this extract from Eddie Askew's book, *Facing the Storm*.

This is what God is like...

He's concerned about every aspect of life, everyone's life. Yours and mine. God tells the prophet Haggai, "I will shake the nations..." (Haggai 2:7). And Jesus assures us, "Not a sparrow will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father". (Matthew 10: 29-31) And that's all the same God. Nothing too large for him, nothing too small. He's as concerned about my

And that's all the same God. Nothing too large for him, nothing too small. He's as concerned about my small problems and needs as he is about the great political issues. As concerned about my future as about the world's. Whatever concerns us today, he's there with us, lovingly involved, and we can take comfort.

Lord of the great, it's difficult to understand quite how, but all the world's concerns that scare me so, are somehow in your hands. And taking that to heart, I find my courage a little greater than it was before.

#### SOMETHING BETTER THAN BISCUITS!

One Sunday morning, at a small village church, the new vicar called upon one of the congregation to lead the opening prayer. The man stood up, bowed his head and prayed:

Lord, I hate buttermilk,

and Lord, I hate lard. Also Lord, I'm not too keen on plain flour.

But after you mix them all together and bake them in the oven, I just love the biscuits.

So, Lord, help us to realise that when life gets hard, when things come up that we don't like and when we don't understand what you are doing, that we need to wait and see what you are making.

After you get through mixing and baking, it will probably (definitely!)be something better than biscuits! Amen

# WHEN THIS IS OVER Laura Kelly Fanucci

When this is over,
may we never again take for granted
a handshake with a stranger,
full shelves at the store,
a crowded theatre, a Friday night out,
the taste of communion,
a routine check-up, a school rush each morning,
coffee with a friend, the stadium roaring,
each deep breath, a boring Tuesday,
Life itself.

When this ends, may we find that we have become more like the people we wanted to be, we hoped to be.

And may we stay that way – better for each other, because of the worst.

#### EXERCISES FOR MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH

for any time, but particularly while churches are closed.

Spend time quietly at the beginning of each day:



\*Praising & thanking God for who he is/what he has done for us \*Declaring Christ's victory over disease, death and despair \*Declaring your trust in Jesus and his Spirit,

\*Deliberately put the

whatever happens.

day into the Lord's hands (and keep on doing it throughout the day if worries/ fear creep in)

\*Pray for others. You may want to develop prayer lists, but don't be overwhelmed by them. And if you haven't time or energy, why not simply put your hand over the names on the page and say the Aaronic blessing over them (Numbers 6: 24-26)

How about learning some verses by heart (with its Bible 'address')? e.g. Philippians 4: 6-8; Deuteronomy 33: 27

Have any phrases/ verses 'jumped out at' you from your Bible reading? Write them in a notebook with their reference and date.

\*Use your hymnbook. If you don't have one at home and would like one, please get in touch with your elder/ pastoral visitor or me (Margaret King 01343 820937 and we will arrange for you to get one from the Church until the 'storm' is over. That goes for a Bible also.)

\*Listen to Christian music

Radio 4 Long Wave at 09.45 provides a <u>Daily</u> <u>Service</u> - 15 mins of encouragement, prayer and worship.

Keith Community Radio (Moray Firth Radio) FM 107.7 puts out a service by local Christians at 10am on Sun mornings and helpfully gives hymn numbers at the beginning.

Those 'on-line' have an abundance of provision. And many are watching *Reflections at the Quay*. Why not discuss what you've seen and heard with others?

## <u>SOME MORE EXERCISES – FOR THE CHUCKLE MUSCLES</u>

 $^*$  A key ring is a handy little gadget – it enables you to lose all your keys at once.  $\odot$ 

\* He who laughs last, thinks slowest....duh! .... .... .... 😊 😊

\* Change is inevitable  $\,\sim\,$  except from a vending machine.  $\,\odot\,$ 

 $^*$  If the shoe fits, get another one just like it.  $\odot$ 

\* God gave you toes as a device for finding furniture in the dark. ©

#### WEDNESDAY PRAYER GROUP

Our Prayer Group still 'meets' at 8am on Wednesday mornings, but has morphed into the PYJAMA PRAYER GROUP, which may or may not be our mode of dress as we are not 'zooming' or video-conferencing thankfully! ©. Joining our 'At Home Pray-ers', we use our imaginations,



deliberately bringing Jesus and each other to mind, taking time to be still, which, rather strangely, still needs to be worked at, even when we are not rushing around as we used to. We start with praise and thanks to our wonderful LORD – so much to be thankful for in our area and church! And now answered prayer for Seòras as he takes small steps back to work! We 'share' any wee devotion/ hymn/ prayer points/ requests (general or specific), that have been sent round by email the night before, and pray as we feel led. Sometimes, later in the day, people feed back what they have been praying about or a hymn that has come to mind with helpful words. We try to finish together at 08.20 by imagining joining hands in God's Spirit and saying together the 'Grace' or other blessing on the sheet. We pray regularly for the wider church but would love to pray with you, in complete confidence, for any specific concern you may have. Margaret King (820937)

#### "STREETS FULL OF LOVE AND CARE"

In her 'Victory in Europe Day' speech, the Queen said, "Our streets are not empty. They are filled with the love and care we have for each other." Many have been taking part in the Clap for the NHS and by doing so have 'found' neighbours and become more of a community, for which we praise and thank God.



The weekly "Date Night" when neighbours gather on their doorsteps to show appreciation for the dedication of NHS staff, Carers and all our Key Workers provides a welcome opportunity to "reach out" to one another across drive-ways, hedges, garden fences and streets. Knowing that communities throughout the whole country are joining

together in this way enables us all to feel connected.

Throughout our village, neighbours can be seen waving, smiling (sometimes through tears) and clapping – very admirable when we're aware that some folks are experiencing great sadness. Whilst missing joining with our loved ones (near and far) we are grateful for this opportunity to see one another and acknowledge that adhering to the current guidelines should help us all to remain safe and well.

Living in this wee corner of Fochabers is a blessing. Hardly a day goes past without some sort of kindness taking place from a note/letter delivered by our much appreciated Postman to beautiful flowers, delicious home-bakes and cake, pancakes, a jar of jam, soup, a loaf of bread appearing on the doorstep — all in addition to the many friendly waves across the street, 'phone calls, e-mails, texts and video calls with family and friends.

I noticed a caption in a paper recently – "Kindness is not a trend, it's a way of life" which leads me on naturally to our neighbour, Mr. Jim McArthur.

Every Thursday evening at 8.00 p.m. (sharp!) Mr. McArthur (95) is the first person on his front doorstep to lead the weekly "clap for carers!"

Jim is an inspiration to everyone who has the pleasure to know him. His gratitude for the NHS and all our Carers is shown in his special "clap" - arms way above his head – try it – you'll know about it the next day, I can assure you! Not one to miss an opportunity to share with others, the gift of a four-leaved clover from his garden to each of his neighbours was well received – all thought out



beforehand with social-distances taken into consideration!

From our humble abode, on the corner, Alex and I have the added pleasure of joining with neighbours from two streets! After a welcome long-distance catch-up with our immediate neighbours, a unique version of "Zoom" is exercised by zooming round the corner to enjoy hearing the bagpipes and fiddle being played by some of our extremely talented youngsters. A wonderful finale to the night!

On a daily basis, I pray that we are all feeling blessed with many different forms of kindness from a variety of sources. Each morning during my jaunt to the local shop (where Staff are invariably cheery and considerate) I give grateful thanks for the love, care and concern shown for one another throughout our Community.

Friendship blessings to all, Alison ©

#### The best vitamin for a Christian is - B1

It was a quiet Monday morning in September 2053, when John awoke with a need to go to the bathroom.

To John, this wasn't just any ordinary day!

This was the day he would open the last package of toilet paper that his parents bought in the year 2020.

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### SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY (e-er-um...)

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May – Pentecost Sunday – celebrating the 'birth' of the Christian Church.

Read Acts 1 & 2

#### HOW MIGHT WE CELEBRATE SEPARATELY TOGETHER?

**A birthday party** would initiate discussion about the significance of Pentecost - could have a red theme - perhaps merge with our rainbow theme for Hope.

Could you make a 'kite' with flame-coloured streamers representing the flames? Or draw a kite and put it in the window along with your rainbow with words like 'freedom', 'victory', 'power' and 'love'.

What about making a few **'Happy Pentecost' cards** to be delivered to church members nearby or posted to an older relative/ friend with our love and encouragement? Snail mail of this sort is much appreciated!

### I am the church, you are the church; WE are the Church together ###

**Count red and yellow flowers** (dandelions included!) in an agreed small patch of ground. Does anyone else in the household get the same number?!



Take 'selfie' beside a candle or other light source; photos of burgeoning life and send to John McC so that he can make Pentecost Parade to go with his amazing Easter Parade 'movie'! Copy them to Editor, please!

#### Pentecost/ Lock-down Challenge

**Read a whole book of the Bible at one sitting** e.g. Philippians or some of the other Letters. Pray before you start – something like. *Father, I'm a bit frightened that I will find it too difficult; that you* 



won't speak to me as I've heard that you speak to others through your Word. I'm frightened that you will speak to me and I won't like what you say! But I do want to get to know you better, so help me to trust you. Amen.

Try Mark's gospel – right through. Don't stop at end of chapters. Read 'over the top of' things you don't understand. Have a notebook and pen handy to note down the reference of anything that particularly 'sticks out' to you, so that you can go back to it later. If you need a modern translation of the Bible, let us know and tell us how you get on.

# Have a great Pentecost! Keep safe!

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Scottish Charity Number SC005310

#### NEXT ISSUE

### Please send in 'copy' and photos AS & WHEN you have them.

Tell us how you are getting on! What changes in your lifestyle do you want to carry forward post-Lockdown? What has been a highlight/ 'low-light'? Have you started/ completed a Pentecost/ Lock-down challenge or project? **Drop me a line**/ email - Contact Details above.

PS Mark Evans DCS, President of the Diaconate Council, wrote about the immediate aftermath of the crucifixion: Yet even in the darkness, the stars continued to shine - and love, whilst unseen and unfelt, continued to weave its silent thread, holding them together, uniting them in the darkness. And then it happened, love which seemed dead reached out through locked doors and into hidden rooms. It dispersed the gloom, and healed the pain with the simple words,

PEACE BE WITH YOU.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE ... JESUS, THE RISEN CHRIST, IS WITH YOU.