

Weekly Newsletter No 17 – Sunday 12 July 2020

Dear Friends,

The Gospel reading for today, the sixth Sunday after Pentecost, is the parable of sowing the seed, Matthew 13: 1-9 & 18-23. There are several ways of looking at this parable but one important way is to look at ourselves. What kind of ground are we? Ask the questions:

Am I fertile ground with an open heart and open mind?

Am I ground mixed with weeds and thorns, too busy with other things to receive and nurture the seeds?

Am I stony ground, too set in my ways to listen, too proud to admit I could be wrong?

These are questions for all of us.



Way out of lockdown – reopening of churches.

You will have undoubtedly heard that churches may soon be able to reopen on a limited basis for worship. This is great news. We now await the updated advice on how we can achieve this and expect this advice towards the end of the week. Some of the things we have to consider will

include keeping a record of those who use the church, social distancing, wearing of facemasks, hand sanitising, cleaning the building, no use of toilets - just to mention a few! However, “we shall overcome” but it will take a wee while, probably a few weeks. One issue we have to deal with is that most of the ‘willing helpers’ in our churches are over 70 and thus are considered in a higher risk group. At

the moment we are not sure how this will affect those over 70 years of age helping with the various tasks; it could be an insurance matter so we have to fully explore all of these issues before we can get going. Our plans require to be submitted to and approved by Presbytery who have the final say. They can also close churches which fail to adhere to the rules.

The First Minister did say that coming out of ‘lockdown’ would be more difficult than starting it – she is dead right there!

So dear friends, for the time being, stick with the on-line worship and praise. Remember the 7.00pm prayer time on Sunday when we join with fellow Christians throughout not only Scotland but the whole of the UK.



Bellie & Speymouth Church

Reaching out - Welcoming in

Donate Now.

The Church of Scotland has devised a simple way for people to donate to the Church. If you go to the Church of Scotland website you will see on the Home Page, a section which says, 'Support your local church with our new online donations system'.

[Donate Now](#)

By clicking on this section, you will find out how you can donate to the church in general and/or to a nominated church. It appears to be a very simple and safe method of donating to the work of the church locally and nationally. As you will be aware, the closure of churches has seen a large drop in the finances of the church (Bellie and Speymouth are not exempt from this!). So, give it a try!

Stone snake.

Last week Sophie Campbell placed her own stone on the line of stones by the Fochabers Burn. This snake has been growing with messages of hope, thanks and encouragement. Since Sophie placed her stone there have been many more. We send a big 'Thank You' to all who have contributed – it just makes living here that bit more special.



Over 300 stones and still growing



These stone snakes have been growing all over the country so if you are away on a wee holiday, have a look for them and perhaps take a photo which we can publish in a future newsletter.

Bellie & Speymouth Church

Reaching out - Welcoming in

Birthdays and Anniversaries.

The restrictions on celebrating birthdays and anniversaries are changing and it may be that some of you who are celebrating this week will be able to have more family and friends to help with the fun. Be careful though and remember the advice on how to stay safe. Remember, this bug has not gone away. But for all of you who are celebrating, from your church family and beyond,



Holidays

Some of us are going to be able to have a wee break in the coming weeks. At the moment I haven't heard of anyone going abroad but some are heading to some exotic destinations eg Inverness, Foyers,



Durness, Sutherland

Loch Tay, Sandend, Dingwall, even one couple I know are heading for Dunnet Bay near Thurso (brrrr) then to Durness with their camper van. It's great that we can now get away but this has been hard earned.



Sandend, Banffshire

So 'Thank You' to all who have made these trips possible by sticking to the 'lockdown' rules.

Big 'Thank You's' to all who have been and are still helping neighbours and others. The Community Larder is still working at the Scout Huts in Mosstodloch (Monday and Friday 11.00-1230) and Fochabers (Wednesday and Friday 11.00-1230). They continue to need our help with those extra provisions, toys and games for the kids, so please remember them.

During the coming week, let's look forward to the new freedoms we can have; ice cream shop and Chippie both open – what more do we need! Some are already queuing for the hairdresser on the 15th when they open. (I saw one woman (70+) this week who is sporting a natty wee pony tail – first time in her life). What about 'Afternoon Tea' under an umbrella in the pouring rain – ah well, it's July so what do you expect!



Enjoy these freedoms – you have earned them.

We said that with God's help, we would get through this and he has delivered – now that's worth a big 'THANK YOU'.

Blessings to all

John