



## Weekly Newsletter No 25 - Sunday 6 September 2020

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### Ah well – we kinda expected it!

Many of us have been able to enjoy the relaxing of restrictions during the summer, meeting friends and relatives, visiting places, going out to a restaurant or café but with the rise in the spread of the Coronavirus COVID-19 we have to return to a more restrictive regime. There are some in our church family and beyond who have found the lockdown, even when partially lifted, a tough experience. Generally though it hasn't been much fun and we enjoy fun.

As human beings we are social animals who like to gather in groups, especially groups who share a common interest. This may be a small gathering of family and friends all the way up to a gathering of thousands to support a football team, enjoying an agricultural show, Speyfest or the Fochabers Gala. These events bring people together. It is important then, with the new restrictions we make an effort and keep in touch with people. Yes, electronic communication is good but we can still mix with each other. We can still meet a friend for a coffee, invite neighbours for their tea or just for a chat.

As of Monday we can only meet in groups of up to six people from two households so get organising your weekly meetings with friends and family – it's not difficult.



### From Seòras

#### UPDATE ON CHURCH RE-OPENING

I am very pleased to say that we are working as a Kirk Session to open back up for worship in a safe, measured, and considerate way in the near future. A huge thanks to our session clerk John in particular, who has been putting a lot of time and effort into the extensive paperwork required!



If you are a member of our church then you will be shortly receiving a letter in the mail with more information about the re-opening. Included will also be a paper form for providing information about your planned attendance when in-person services resume.

For those in our church family who are not members, you are also welcome to give your feedback. At the end of this week's newsletter you will find the form where you can express your intentions to attend/not attend in person. Please return this info in whatever way you can to Seòras at; 11 The Square, Fochabers, IV32 7DG or <[sorr@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sorr@churchofscotland.org.uk)> by **Thursday 17th September**. Contact him with any questions.

This information will be immensely helpful for the kirk session's decision of when/how to resume Sunday worship. This is not a sign-up sheet for a service, but simply for us to know expected numbers so we can plan our re-opening appropriately.

As I have also said in the members' letter, God's Kingdom is not stopped by our absence in our buildings, or by changes to our worship pattern. All the way through scripture, God's people have had to follow Him through all sorts of challenges and difficulties, and we are no different. Let us hold tightly to our identity in Christ, pray for our world, and continue to shine the light of the gospel to our families, friends, and communities.

God bless,  
Seòras

We have been experimenting with the lay-out of the chairs at Bellie Church. It will sure look different! We tried to place the chairs as 'doubles' to allow wife/husband etc to sit together. This means we can get about 40 in the sanctuary – all those chairs piled at the back of the church will need to be placed in the hall to make room but that will only give us another half dozen or so. Placing the seats singly doesn't increase the numbers significantly.



Experimenting with chair lay-out at Bellie Church to achieve the 2 metre rule

There's going to be plenty to do and we will be looking for help when the time comes. One thing we will need is people to welcome folk to the church, show them to their seats and organise them leaving.

Please indicate in the reply to Seòras's letter if you are happy to help with this, or anything else. We will need your help. Don't rely on that famous person 'someone else'.

Read Nehemiah Ch 2 and 3 of how the Israelites worked together to rebuild Jerusalem – inspiring. OK we don't have to build Jerusalem but it shows how we can work together. Let's pray about that.

## GOD AROUND US - GOD WITHIN US

One of the places that many of us have spent more time in during lockdown is our kitchens! No work canteens, sandwiches at the desk or at the site, no dinners with friends, no restaurants or cafes. Perhaps leading to more time in our own homes preparing food.



Now I personally love cooking. I remember the first dish that I learned to cook was French toast and bacon. I realise now that it was a very tactical decision on the part of my mum and dad, as this meant I would cook it some Saturday mornings for my parents.



Cooking is an amazing thing in that it engages ALL of our senses. The sound of ingredients being chopped, grated, poured, sizzling in a pan. The sight of the different colours changing and mixing. The sensation of all the different textures of food. The smell of food cooking. And of course, the taste of the finished dish.

The preparation and enjoyment of food is a constant theme throughout the Bible. From Jacob's birth-right being sold for a game stew and the Passover meal of the Old Testament, right through to the feeding of the 5,000 and the Last Supper of the New Testament. Food is a way in which entire locations are given character. The promised land is described to Moses as one flowing with "milk and honey". It even applies to heaven. One of the images of our future with God is a feast. Not just a celebration or victory, but a gathering around a grand meal.

Then we have Communion. This ancient, powerful, and highly important sacrament throughout the church. What is it? It is the consumption of bread and wine. We celebrate the fact that Jesus died and rose again for our forgiveness through the celebration and image of a MEAL.

Eating is even used as a way to describe the way we experience our faith. Psalm 34:8, "Taste and see that the Lord is good". That first encounter with the living God is compared to tasting something which assures us of His goodness. It's like the first time you try what becomes your favourite dish. It is so much more than just something tasty. It is something which goes on to hold great significance, to represent something more than a meal.

Food and faith seem to go hand and hand throughout scripture.

Now, we acknowledge God at the time of saying grace, thanking Him before we eat. But we can experience some simple form of worship in eating food itself. Perhaps this week, as you tuck into something tasty, take a moment to really savour that experience. The gift of your senses, the enjoyment of something that could be so practical. Try and say grace right in the middle of your meal this week. I promise that won't be frowned upon...



### **Let us pray;**

Heavenly Father,

God of our senses, artist of our experiences. Thank-you for the amazing gift of food. The smells, sound, touch, sight and taste of something that could simply sustain us, but instead has the ability to enliven and enthuse us.

We pray that our prayers of grace would not just be empty words, but a recognition of your provision and your creativity. Would we appreciate the gift of food, and savour its impact on our senses.

Lord your will is that we would live our lives to the full. That even through trials and challenge for the sake of your kingdom, we would find joy. Remind us of these little blessings with every taste we experience.

In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN.

## Birthdays

When we think of birthday celebrations, it is often for the kids. But remember that older people have birthdays too. So here is a special message for all of the older people who have birthdays this week:-

*Be your own light. Find your own way.  
It should be easy with all those candles!*

## Food Glorious Food



What a week for food. We were baking biscuits at Messy Church, then Hamish and Sullivan baked a cake (with beetroot in it) then Seòras's message on Sunday complete with flaming frying pans and now his message this week. (funny how no-one mentions the washing-up).

As was mentioned, it was as he sat eating with his friends that Jesus explained some of his teachings. At times his dining habits shocked those around him, he dined with a tax-collector (some of us may find that difficult today!)

Sharing a meal with friends is one of the most pleasurable things we can do.

For most of us, food is just something we have. We buy as much as we want, we eat what we want, we eat as much or as little as we want – it's our choice.

But for some in our community and around the world this is not the case. Simply having enough to eat is, for many, a daily struggle. This may be through poverty, through a chaotic lifestyle or through illness, physical or mental (anorexia is one of the few potentially fatal mental illnesses).

Yes, we can and should pray that everyone has enough to eat but we can take practical steps. We can share our wealth and donate to food banks or Christian Aid or other charity but we can also invite people who are on their own to share a meal with us – it doesn't have to be fancy food.



## Highlights this week

Apart from making your own highlights this week, there are some others to look forward to

- Sunday's video reflections from Seòras (and Hamish)
- Coffee/tea time on Sunday morning at 11.00am
- Prayer time with Christians throughout Scotland and beyond (as Rev Martin Fair says, "And what better than to join with brothers and sisters from across the nation at 7pm on Sunday to pray our way through this ongoing crisis") The theme this week is 'forgiveness'.
- Return the completed feedback form to Seòras.

So, look after yourselves this coming week. Try to make life a bit brighter for everyone by being kind to yourself as well as others. As we seek forgiveness, forgive others – it's funny but when you do that, everything seems brighter.

Wishing you all every blessing  
John



**Bye for now.**

## RE-OPENING FEEDBACK FORM

NAME(S) OF THOSE PLANNING TO ATTEND	
EMAIL ADDRESS (If you would like to receive our weekly newsletter)	

I/we would prefer to attend worship at the following time and location  
(please tick)

- Speymouth Church, Sunday morning
- Speymouth Church, Sunday evening
- Bellie Church, Sunday morning
- Bellie Church, Sunday evening
- I do not plan to attend in person at this time

Any comments/additional information;

Return to: 11 The Square, Fochabers, IV32 7DG or [sorr@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sorr@churchofscotland.org.uk)  
by Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> of September.