

Weekly Newsletter: Issue 20

Keep up that sense of humour!

There's so much going on in the world that could have us despair at the moment, so it's good to find things that keep us laughing! I've been enjoying some of the signs appearing outside of churches across the pond during the lockdown.



Bellie Church Clock

You may have noticed that the clock on Bellie Church tower has stopped. There is nothing wrong with the clock but we have had to allow it to stop to ensure the safety of our loyal 'clock-winder-upper'. To keep the clock going, someone has to enter the church tower and manually wind up the weights which power the clock's mechanism. The arguably increased risk of casual transmission of the COVID-19 virus due to the relaxation of restrictions is simply a risk we are not prepared to take. Thus, for next wee while, you will not be able to use the Bellie Church clock to see how late the bus is or when the chemist opens, but be assured we will have it back up and running as soon as we can.

The clock's nae workin'!





Moray Food Plus (the posh name for our local Food Bank) has been working during the pandemic lockdown to assist with the provision of food and other essentials to those in need.

In April they saw a huge increase in referrals with 377 being made to support 1091 individuals in Moray, last year it was 202 referrals to support 446 individuals. These numbers decreased during May/June mainly due to the COVID-19 funding available through the local council. However, it is anticipated that once this funding ends there will be a dramatic rise in referrals. Additionally, over the period of lockdown, the Food Bank distributed 300 freshly prepared meals per week and some 3050 care packages.

Most local supermarkets and several local shops donate a great deal of produce to the Food Bank but it is likely that in the near future we shall have to play our part and renew our efforts to contribute to the Food Bank. We shall let you know how we are to do this in due course.

Online coffee catch-up!

Sunday 2nd August, 3pm



This is a chance for our church family to meet together online for an informal catch up.

Have a tea or coffee ready, and we'll have some time together. Seoras will share a short thought, and then we'll break into small groups to share how the last few months have been.

Send a message to Seoras or to the Bellie & Speymouth Facebook page for an electronic invite. We plan to use "Zoom" which means you will simply need to click a website link (on your phone/computer/tablet) in order to join the group call.



From Margaret King;

Dear Friends

I was remembering that this would have been our ecumenical SpeyFest Church service this Sunday. So, especially for those not able to join on-line things, how about setting aside time at 3pm to have a cup of tea and wander down memory lane. Give thanks for all our friends and neighbours at Gordon Chapel, St Mary's, St Andrew's Lhanbryde & Urquhart [SALU] and elsewhere - all continuing to worship in different ways during lockdown. Some of you will have been at every service since it started.

I remember once speaking about the fact that God's first 'church' was a tent – the Tabernacle. I think it was after that service that there was an electric moment of silence before a lone piper started up with Highland Cathedral and walked through the midst of us. It was always good to see the Fochabers Fiddlers there – bleary-eyed, but there! I remember being moved by Rev Seòras' prayer for others at his first SpeyFest Service and Andrew Savory's (SALU) talk/ rap? about Elijah. And what about Amy from Gordon Chapel, and the children, releasing the white doves which circled round the field before flying 'home'? What was your favourite hymn? Remember the sunny weather and 'plooterin' through the mud!?

Lord God, thank you for every good memory of times in 'your tent', for the working together of ministers, congregations and musicians from all the local churches and beyond, for the children and the praise, for laughter and fellowship. Thank you for being with us today in our home and garden 'chapels', for being together in Jesus by your Spirit, if not in person. We praise you because you are the same yesterday, today and forever.



There are wonderful rosehips on the path behind Gordon Chapel. They are huge in comparison with those beside the burn. Why is that I wonder? These 9 ducklings on the Lake have all survived as far as I know! ☺ Bring to mind the scenes of nature that you have most enjoyed during lockdown or before and say thank you to their Creator. Sing *All things bright and beautiful!*

This is Sid, the stone snake at Kingston. The Fochabers one is now reaching towards the footbridge over the burn. I don't know if it has a name yet.



A 'pixie village' is appearing at the far end of the Mosstodloch Wood.

Dear Lord, thank you so much for our local communities, for families working together creatively to keep people's spirits up and to give thanks for key workers. Thank you for sharing your creative spirit with us. Turn folks' hearts to you in faith. Help them and us to depend on you for our safety, health and eternal joy!





A message from the manse family



Some of you will already have heard this, but Debbs and I have some sad news to share. We were expecting another baby, who sadly went to be with Jesus a month ago after Debbs suffered a very traumatic miscarriage at 12 weeks. We are grieving for the sudden loss of this little life God gave us to cherish and love and honour, and also recovering from the added physical trauma – Debbs had uncontrolled blood loss so was taken to hospital by ambulance and then had to have surgery.

After this news was shared with the church offices at 121 and the elders, I was very kindly given compassionate leave, to grieve and to help Debbs who was very weak physically as well as dealing with her loss. If you'd like to pray for us, please pray for comfort and for peace – and thank you so much to those who have prayed and shown their care in many other ways.

Thankfully, as Christians, we know that death is not the end of the story. Not only did Jesus rise again from the dead, but he defeated the power of death. For Debbs and I, this means that we have the comfort of knowing our little one is seeing God face to face, revelling in his glory, knowing the love of our King in a way we here on earth can only look forward to. Jesus' victory means we have the promise in Revelation 21:4 that one day there will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain. However, it does not mean that grief no longer hurts. On this side of eternity, death exists and our lives are left with gaping holes where our loved ones should be alongside us.

It's something that most people find difficult to talk about. *What's the 'right' thing to say? What will make it better? What if I say the wrong thing?* These are just some of the thoughts that have gone through my head when trying to comfort someone who has lost a loved one. But having stared grief full in the face, both as a minister and as the one grieving, I think there is actually no 'right thing' to say – what matters is expressing that you care, listening if that person wants to talk, and if not, simply being there.

There are many people in our church family who are grieving, whether for spouses, children, mothers, fathers, siblings, unborn babies, other family members, friends, colleagues... Whether recent losses, childhood losses or anything in between... If you miss a loved one or are struggling with grief in any way, if you'd find it helpful to have someone to talk to, or want someone to simply be with you for company on a hard day like an anniversary, please reach out. Debbs and I are here, as well as the pastoral care team – no one needs to suffer in silence. As well as praying and listening to your experience, we can signpost you to professional help and resources to help you in that grief journey.

Love and prayers, Seoras, Debbs and Sullivan