

COMFORT in North Carrick

Caring Observant Mindful Friendly Obliging Responsible Tactful
Providing comfort to the people of North Carrick at a time of crisis
Sunday 21st June 2020

From Rev Dr John Lochrie, Locum minister at Crosshill and Maybole Parish Churches

We have now been in lockdown for 10 weeks. It has meant that there has been much less human activity. With less traffic on the roads and fewer people out and about wild life has been taking advantage. There have been goats in the streets of Llandudno, a fox walking down Downing Street, deer on the platform at Rannoch Station and there have been numerous photos in the papers of wild life in unusual places. The other day we had a young squirrel knocking on the window. It was clearly a youngster as it was able to get inside the squirrel proof bird feeder. It was quite unafraid and simply stared back at me when I tried to chase it off so that the birds could feed!



The birds too have become less afraid and more adventurous. Even the woodpecker which last year would take flight even when we stood at the window is happy to allow us to come fairly close while it is feeding on the peanut cage. They do not seem to care about social distancing! During the good weather we have taken the opportunity to sit on the bench outside. There is a bird feeder only five feet away and now the birds come down even when we are there though before if anyone was outside they would stay away.

Clearly not everything is bad about the lockdown. If the wildlife can adapt to the changed circumstances we have to try. As things gradually improve it is becoming clear that the new normal will be very different. Somehow we have to make it a better normal. It will not be simple. It is likely that unemployment will rise as many businesses will not reopen and many that are able to restart will face economic pressures. The NHS is going to face new challenges as it seeks to cope with the backlog of cancer care and other routine surgery. Reopening our churches for worship will be a far from simple process. Like the wild life we are going to have to adapt.



In Romans 8 Paul reminds us that all things work together for good to them that love God. In faith we have to trust that He will lead us through the difficult times that lie ahead. As Noah came through the flood to a new beginning we have to trust that we shall find the way through under God's good guidance. When Noah and his family came out of the ark they saw the sign of the rainbow as God made his covenant with them to protect them. From the way the sign of the rainbow is used now it can be too easy to forget its proper significance. God is with us now as he was with Noah so as Paul said to the Thessalonians that we are not like those that have no hope. For us "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1). In faith we can march forward void of fear knowing that He who has led will lead in the days to come.

***I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how you made them feel." -Maya Angelou***

The signs that we are beginning to move away from the restrictions we have been experiencing are all around us as we begin to see aircraft flying overhead, increased traffic, nonessential shops opening and opportunities to get back to work, for some.

From Thursday, Scotland began to move into phase 2 and from Monday churches will be able to open for private prayer.

Things are beginning to get back to "normal" which will bring happiness to many but could increase fear for others. Over this difficult time we have recovered our sense of community, faith communities have worked together with volunteer and civic groups, interested only in how we can help those who may be facing difficulties.

Government and civic authorities have made funds available to ease life for those most in need. But along with opening up comes closing down, many of the ventures set up to care for those in need are identifying end dates coinciding with proposed dates for the end of restrictions.

For those who have received support through this time there can be a fear of going back to "normal", to facing isolation, food poverty, educational disadvantage, being forgotten. We have had time to become aware of individuals with need rather than just knowing a problem exists.

Those we have come to know and care for in our community will still need us, so, as we prepare for our individual life response to the end of restrictions so as a community we must begin to plan for how we continue to care for the vulnerable in our community.

As our lives become filled with the joy of reconnecting with family and friends, picking up our social life again and feeling free to visit our churches, so may God fill us with the grace and compassion to continue to hold in our hearts, and in our care, those we have come to know and serve in their need.

"Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier." -Mother Teresa

Fr Jim St Oswald's



The Gospel tells us many times not to be afraid. I know that I have to remind myself often that it is God's perfect love for us that casts out the fears and anxieties with which life's external circumstances can surround us.

Jesus puts it very comfortingly when he tells us that every hair on our head has been counted.

Given our current world situation, it is so easy to be anxious, to fear what the future might hold. In the face of possible austerity, unemployment and who knows what, it is a good time to remind ourselves that we journey together as one family of God, under his providence. Forty years in the desert with the Israelites did not stretch God's power, though it may have tried his patience!

Surely together with him we too can look forward to entering a better future. He has left the establishment of his Kingdom in our hands. It's up to us to follow where his Spirit leads and that's where the trouble usually begins, isn't it?

Maybe this is the time, the opportunity, to follow the way of faith in Jesus Christ, to speak and act jointly on major issues, so that our voice can be heard and heeded, locally and country-wide?

We can be sure that whatever external conditions prove to be, God's love will grant us an inner peace and contentment to work together as Christian Churches to influence our future, here in Maybole and further afield. The gift of his peace is one which the world can neither give nor influence negatively. So fear is denied entry and hope flourishes.

I recall vividly the advice of an American priest during a time of intense trauma and fear in my life. He gave me this simple prayer. *'Fear is knocking at the door. Lord Jesus, will you answer it?'*

And he does, sometimes at once, sometimes he asks for a bit of patience, but he is always listening and always helps us overcome our fears.

Ellen Hawkes

A thought for today from Lynne at the Parish Church

Today I had been going to write about my thoughts and fears on the easing of lockdown, the preparations both in the church and in school, as we look to the new normal, but then I received 2 emails about a Prayer Request from Ayr Presbytery's Malawi contacts in Dundonald and felt compelled to share it.



Hi Sandy & Frances,

Greetings from our family to you in Jesus name. I would like to ask you to join us in praying for our country Malawi as we are re-voting on 23rd June, this coming Tuesday, for the presidential position. We have had very bad campaign—some people have been killed through burning their houses, beaten up. Judges have been forced to go on leave pending for retirement while their years of serving are still on. Therefore, we need our God to intervene in this situation so that no bloodshed should take place.

Stay blessed and have a good day. In His service, Bordington & Elizabeth."

I share this with you in the hopes that during your prayer time today, you can include concerns about Malawi, and countries and communities across the world—where as well as Corona virus, people are faced with other and equally threatening, situations.

As always when faced with something too big for me to handle on my own, I turned to scripture, Philippians 4 verses 4, 6 and 7.

4 So then, my friends, how dear you are to me and how I miss you! How happy you make me, and how proud I am of you! — this, dear friends, is how you should stand firm in your life in the Lord...6 Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. 7 And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

Today I will pray for Malawi and all its people, and I will pray that we all experience God's peace in our hearts.

IN PURSUIT OF A GOAL

It is said that the happiest days of our life are those we spend at school. The lockdown has certainly created a new kind of 'schooling', and some of those at our primary schools will now move on to secondary education without having been back in their original building! Others will be finishing school and facing a strange and uncertain world.

Those completing their education will have their goals in life, the ambitions they want to achieve. This applies to each of us—it has been said that "if you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time."

In Philippians 3: 10-21, St. Paul speaks of his goal, his own lifelong ambition. There, he tells us that "*forgetting what is behind, and reaching out to what lies ahead, I press towards the finishing line, to win the heavenly prize to which God has called me in Christ Jesus.*" To grasp the goal for which God in Christ has grasped him, the apostle must "press on" regardless until he has attained it. He must never rest on his laurels, lest he becomes complacent or lose sight of his objective.

To have a goal, an ambition, a sense of purpose in life is nothing less than responsible Christian living. If we fail to have our goals, "*we crawl on the floor while we have wings to fly.*" In a word: we waste both our time and our talents. In the Christian life, we are not meant to rest on our laurels, but to "press on" with what God has called us to do in Christ Jesus.

J.S. Bach gave much to sacred music. He was a prolific composer, but was never one to rest on his laurels and bask in the glory of past achievements. Bach devoted his life in passionate pursuit of the goal he believed God had prescribed for him in Jesus Christ. By doing what St Paul did, what Bach and what countless others have done, this world has been reshaped for the better.

The hard part may not be identifying the goal or ambition, or even "pressing on" towards its attainment. The hard part may be getting started. In the 1700s a French socialite, Madame du Deffand, said: "*The distance is nothing; it is only the first step that is difficult.*"

Making a start. Is that a problem for us? Or, like St. Paul, do we "press on" relentlessly, until we reach the goal laid down for us, and come to live eternally with God?

"O come, and let us rejoice!

For we are in the presence of the Holy One."

The Rev. W. Gerald Jones



From Marguerite Hunter Blair

We are the change we seek.

In the gospel message from St Matthew 10:26-33, our Lord is asking each one of us to be a fearless apostle by practising and living our Christian faith.

What our Lord said to His Apostles applies to all of us in the practice of our faith. By the very fact of living our faith openly and fully we are apostles by example. True love of God is living as fearless apostles, helping our family, friends, neighbours and the whole community.

Under the COVID 19 restrictions, the lives of our families and communities have been turned upside down, and changes to circumstances around how we all pray, learn, work and socialise have been dramatic and sudden. The 'new normal' changes by the week. But out of this abrupt halt to life as we knew it has come a hunger for a 'new better'.

The impact of the reduction in pollution during lockdown gave us all hope and a chance to reimagine a different future that benefits the environments in which we live and work and where sustainability is more than just a gesture.

This hope for a better future also extends to justice and fairness. News coverage of racial tensions recently has led to an outpouring of anger and frustration and has made many of us reflect on whether as fearless apostles our everyday actions have been good enough. Pope Francis said, *"we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life."*

Footballer Marcus Rashford's contribution to the debate around poverty had a significant impact this week. "Just look at what we can do when we come together" he tweeted.

Being a fearless apostle means as Christians we need to come together to continually strive for a 'new better' in ourselves and in our world.

As Barack Obama said, "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek".

Last week, we mentioned Nancy Flanagan's birthday. She has sent us this:

"I would like to take the opportunity to thank the parish for the beautiful flowers received on the occasion of my 90th birthday, and also to all those who sent cards and gifts."

Your kindness and good wishes are very much appreciated.

I can assure you that you made what was going to be a quiet celebration very special.

God bless you and I will keep you all in my prayers

Many, many thanks,

Nancy."

