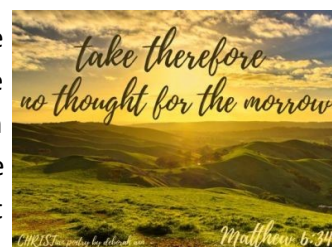


COMFORT in North Carrick

Caring Observant Mindful Friendly Obliging Responsible Tactful
Providing comfort to the people of North Carrick at a time of crisis
Sunday 28th June 2020

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

After three months in lockdown, there are signs that it is becoming safe to take tentative steps to ease our way out. It was always going to be much easier to close the doors to normal life than it would be to open them. In many respects we have all been following the advice of Jesus "to take no thought for tomorrow" (Matthew 6:34), since for most the way to get through these difficult days has been to take each day as it comes.



But now, as restrictions are removed, we find ourselves faced with new decisions. We are now able to meet up with others, but will this put us at greater risk? We can go for what has been described as non-essential shopping, but what might be non-essential for one will be very essential for another. Then going shopping will be a very different experience. Do we want to stand in a queue, suitably socially distanced, be it two metres or one, waiting in the rain to get inside? How do we get to the shops in the first place? With a car it is relatively simple, but going on public transport presents other problems. Yes, avoiding decisions really has been something of a blessing, but we all face decisions now that cannot be put off much longer.

As the virus becomes less prevalent, ways have to be found to open up life again safely. Each of us still has a vital role helping to protect others. Behaving irresponsibly, as a minority appear to have in recent days, is not an option. Things have been happening in the world that all Christian people must condemn but we must do so responsibly. Gathering in great crowds to protest is, in this time of pandemic, unacceptable, and we must hope and pray that we do not have a spike in the virus that would result in everything being put on hold again. This week we have seen the reality of the danger as parts of Germany, a country that has been held to be an example of how to deal with the virus, are shut down again to control a fresh outbreak. It is a clear reminder that there might be less virus going around, but it is still there.

Perhaps then in our present circumstances, taking no thought for tomorrow might not be the best thing to do. It is always dangerous to take things out of context. These words of Jesus should not be read in isolation. They come at the conclusion of an argument laying out how God provides for us. It is an argument that culminates in verse 33 rather than verse 34. There we are told to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, then we shall find that all we require will be added to us.

Paradoxically, that will allow us to continue to take each day as it comes. It will enable us to take all the decisions confronting us now and above all it will enable us to continue to take care for the good and welfare of others. All of these will be essential for finding the right way out of the present lockdown. So let us go with God for, as the poem has it, putting our hand in the hand of God is better than a light on our path and safer than a known way.

Since the killing of African American man George Floyd by police officers last month in Minneapolis, protests and debate have spread across the world about the issues of racism in our past, present and future.



At the same time, the coronavirus pandemic has continued and the resulting lockdown has given us an opportunity to learn about the effect our actions have on the Earth and, as Christians, about what it means to be the Church without physically gathering. So, what can we learn from the response to the murder of George Floyd and what should we be doing as Christians in Scotland?

It might feel like we are a long way away from the USA, but demonstrations have been in our towns and cities and it is clear that the issues surrounding race are not resolved here either. The proclamation of the demonstrators that 'Black Lives Matter' has been a statement that does not mean that the lives of all people are not significant, but that the lives of black people are not less significant.

Our first step to addressing these issues must be acknowledgement of our past, for as long as our history is seen as something that does not inform the future then the feelings of injustice and marginalisation will continue. For example, the history of slavery and the Scottish tobacco merchants whose names now mark streets in the centre of Glasgow. Or the people of the Church who once looked to the Bible as a support for such slavery. Or the wealthy benefactors that funded the building of many of our churches.

To live out our callings as followers of Christ, we should be at the forefront of this process of acknowledgement and reflection on our past in order to help create a better future.

To help us consider our response as Christians, anti-racism resources have been developed in the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway and are available here: <https://glasgow.anglican.org/2020/06/08/anti-racism-actions/>

Matthew Wyllie, St Oswald's Church

In our current climate relationships can be stretched by separation for long periods. It's when we no longer see, touch and socialise with people that we come to realise just how vital and important good relationships are. This surely applies to our relationship with God as well as others. Both are mainstays, constant factors of daily living, especially just now. The words of Christ in this regard are worth deeper reflection. He tells us that if we get our personal relationship with God right, by putting him first, all other human relationships will be strengthened from there.



By letting God be in charge, our relationships with everyone around us benefits.

For the two great apostles Peter and Paul, it was their intimate relationship with God which blessed and enriched their own lives and the lives of all whom they touched. Peter knew Christ in human form while Paul, encountered him through a vision after his resurrection. Both men acknowledged their own failures and weaknesses and relied on their encounter with the risen Lord to get them where he wanted them to be.

For us today, encounter with Christ comes usually through our baptism into faith and the nurturing of that faith by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Through scripture, prayer and sacraments, we are enriched and our relationships flourish beyond our human capacity.

We are fortunate to be members of parish church communities. Both apostles laboured long and hard at setting up such local churches wherever the Spirit led. Today we give thanks that their work still flourishes, as we, their descendants, reap the rewards of their labours and carry on their mission.

May God bless us in our relationships, especially those who are struggling.

Ellen Hawkes

TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

Tales of the Unexpected was a series of stand-alone dramas drawn from the short stories of Roald Dahl, and broadcast on British television from 1979-1988. Each episode told a particular story, often with an unexpected twist ending.



The story in Ecclesiastes 9:14-16 is a tale of the unexpected. We are told that a small town or city was under the threat of siege from a powerful king and its destruction imminent.

From among the citizens, there came a poor wise man; and this man, by his wisdom, delivered the city from destruction. What we have here is someone who, by their 'savvy', perhaps through some shrewd advice, saved the town or city from its enemies, only to be forgotten later by ungrateful people.

What a tale of the unexpected! The small town or city did not owe its survival to a political figure, or to a military strategist, or to an expert in logistics. It owed its rescue to a poor little wise man: a man of little or no importance in the eyes of the civic and military authorities, and a man of limited means. The most unlikely person came forth at the most unlikely moment to save the town! He is someone about whom we might have snobbishly asked, 'Who does he think he is?' What we have is a classic tale of the unexpected.



Great achievements have often come from the least likely of people at the most unlikely of moments. John Logie Baird, son of the minister of St Bride's Church, Helensburgh, waded through waves of ill-health to share in the invention of mechanical television. Louisa Jordan, a young nurse from Maryhill, Glasgow, served as a medic in WW1 and succumbed to typhus in 1915 aged 36, her name being given to the temporary hospital located in the SEC Centre in Glasgow for pandemic purposes. She is still hailed a hero in Serbia for her medical care, while her humble Glasgow origins have recently and rightly been recognised.

Today, researchers worldwide are collaborating in the search for a vaccine for COVID-19, a process accelerated by the urgency the situation demands. We trust that their efforts will be crowned with lasting success. This could be yet another tale of the unexpected - for the vaccine may be found, not by a Nobel Laureate or leading scientist, but by the most unlikely person in the most unlikely place. The 'non-expert', by their wisdom, may become the true 'expert'!

This should not surprise us. The salvation of the world was wrought by Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph, a carpenter, and Mary, a young country woman. On the Cross, the least likely of people reconciled the human race to God, and paved the way to eternal life. All this from a carpenter or craftsman's son! An incredible tale of the unexpected!

Never decry a tale of the unexpected. History is replete with them. The world was redeemed by one of them. Indeed, always expect them!

*"There is nothing love cannot face:
there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance."*

The Rev. W. Gerald Jones

Latest virus news

Physical distancing of two metres continues to be required in Scotland.

Indicative Phase 2 dates:

3 July – Travel distance limit for leisure will be lifted; Self-catering holiday accommodation will be permitted, providing it requires no shared facilities between households

6 July – Outdoor hospitality can commence subject to the Scientific Advisory Group review

Indicative Phase 3 dates:

10 July – People can meet in extended groups outdoors, with physical distancing; Households can meet indoors with up to a maximum of two households, with physical distancing;

13 July – Organised outdoor contact sport can resume for children and young people, subject to guidance; All dental practices begin to see registered patients for non-aerosol routine care, and work will begin to return aerosol generating procedures to practice safely; Increasing capacity within community optometry practices for emergency and essential eye care; Non-essential shops inside shopping centres can reopen, subject to the Scientific Advisory Group review

15 July – All childcare providers can open subject to individual provider arrangements; All holiday accommodation will be permitted; Indoor hospitality can reopen, subject to the Scientific Advisory Group review; Hairdressers and barbers can reopen with enhanced hygiene measures; Museums, galleries, cinemas, monuments, libraries will reopen with physical distancing and other measures, such as ticketing in advance