



Chalmers Memorial Church Information Newsletter April 2020



So, do not be afraid. I am with you. Do not be terrified. I am your God. I will make you strong and help you. I will hold you safe in my hands. I always do what is right. Isaiah 41:10

Dear Friends,

Sunday March 15th 2020... That was the last time we met together as a congregation in our beautiful sanctuary for worship. That was also the date that we spent a few moments, before worship, looking at how we would be observing the “social distancing policy” that was then in place – anything from refraining from hand shaking and hugging to eating biscuits served in sealed wrappers. We had even agreed not to pass the collection plate around and, at communion, to use individual glasses and cubed bread. In other words, we had implemented all the recommendations – and probably more!

All schools closed their doors on Friday 20th March and on Monday 23rd March 2020, the Prime Minister and First Minister announced that the country was to go into lockdown due to the rapid spread of Covid 19 meaning that we were all told to stay at home. Many businesses moved to home working.

It's been hard but we had no choice. Closing our doors was an instruction. I personally haven't been into the Chalmers Church Sanctuary since the 15th March. I am missing it... I miss it desperately... and I know you are too...

However, we have applied those rules rigidly at Chalmers Church. The bells remain silent on a Sunday morning and will do so until we are back at our building again when they will rightly sing out again – as we will too! Instead, for just now, a rainbow of hope has been placed prominently in the Sanctuary window. Here at the Manse we have a rainbow in our window too and a red glass love heart that a kindly person left at our front door recently. Love and hope – there's something about that in the Bible, I think!

It's also something I have witnessed in abundance as I try to conduct “pastoral visits” by telephone. The phone lines in Cockenzie and Port Seton are running red hot with enquiries after folks' wellbeing. We've tried to establish good pastoral contact (there's a short article in this newsletter about that too) and to maintain some form of weekly worship (something I mention elsewhere in this newsletter). Office bearers keep in touch by email and phone.

All in all, we are learning (or should it be re learning?) very quickly what it means to be Church. We have often said, have we not, that that the church is the PEOPLE and not the BUILDING. We now know, more than ever, what that means.

In this impromptu newsletter we want to bring you not only a message of encouragement at this time but also to bring you up to date with some of the things that our Church community has been involved in during these weeks of lockdown. In the meantime, though...

Thank you for your faithfulness – Keep the faith!

Thank you for your prayers – Keep praying!

Thank you for your trust – Keep trusting in God!

And thank you for your personal support to Julia and me. Do not hesitate, even for a moment, to be in touch if there is anything we can do to help.

Your friend and minister,
Robin Allison (Rev)

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK 10th-16th May

Love never fails. Coronavirus impacts all of us. But love unites us all. This Christian Aid week is going to be very different with sadly all events planned being cancelled. We do hope that we might still be able to hold something later in the year. Supporting the good work of Christian Aid is more important than ever and I would ask you to consider using one of the following means to make a donation, online at donate.christianaid.org.uk or by calling 0207 523 2269

Let's Stand Together this Christian Aid week and help families fighting poverty and injustice.

Eleanor Willins

Our Minister

Rev Robin N Allison
Braemar Villa,
2 Links Road,
Port Seton
01875 812225

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COMMUNICATION

I write this strange contribution to a strange newsletter in these strange times. This way of life is very much out of our comfort zone, when so many are having to stay well within the comfort zone our own homes!

But our church community is still very much linked by the different methods of communication we are using, and our District Elders have picked up the role of 'messenger' to you all in your varying degrees of isolation. Many thanks are due to them for keeping us 'together'. There have been many thanks recorded for their efforts, and for help given where Elders themselves are isolated.

As a Session, we have been in touch weekly – or more where necessary – to keep people up to date with current guidance from the Church about finance, buildings, and communication. Our minister and office bearers have been invited to join various meetings online – where presbytery support has been available. The sharing of skills and knowledge has given us choices which have helped take us to where we are today. Our next Session meeting next month may even take on a new format... (To be confirmed!)

The Service Podcasts online seem to have actually widened our community – being open to all outside our church walls. And now a link to the Podcasts by telephone is allowing those without Internet access to phone in to hear a familiar voice share the Gospel with us. Paper copies have been made available where necessary.

As you can read here, our church activities may be curtailed, but members are involved in local initiatives and others give support as they are able. Robin has noted elsewhere the number of funerals he has led, and thanks have been received for the many offers of sympathy and support given to the bereaved. We look forward to sharing our condolences face to face as soon as it is deemed safe. Note that our next Newsletter is scheduled for the end of June/beginning July (Date to be confirmed) and will be open for individual notes of thanks to be recorded.

Meanwhile, I recall a favourite book we read to our small children. Frog could not understand why his friend Toad would not talk to him. He thought he had done something wrong, but Toad just wanted to be alone for a time. Finally, Frog joined Toad on his lily pad, and they enjoyed a quiet time being 'alone together.'

One definition of 'church' in my dictionary is 'a group of people meeting for a religious gathering'. We look forward to being *that* church again. Meanwhile, we can think of, and pray for, each other. May we have the true sense that we can have this time of separation being 'alone together' – perhaps finding this yet another new way of communicating...?

"God be with you 'til we meet again."

Mary Gordon, Session Clerk, mtg.2002@gmail.com 812262

Our Buildings

Most will have noticed that various improvements have taken place recently with a painting programme now completed in the hall and toilets. New floor covering has been laid outside the kitchen and when things return to some form of normality the carpet outside the toilets will be replaced as will the vinyl in the back corridor etc. The exteriors of the Church and hall have also been painted and both are complete apart from replacing a few rotten windowsills which are now receiving attention. Planning permission is being sought to replace the doors and glass work at the Osborne Terrace entrance. Hopefully that will not be too problematic but as it is a conservation area we proceed with caution. There is still quite a lot of work to do but, hopefully, the bulk of the more costly items have been completed (or budgeted). Thanks are due to our small band of volunteers who have worked well over the past couple of years or so and, as we move forward, if you can help in any way please contact me. Gardeners are specifically required.

John Murdoch

Stewardship

The Pandemic and the resulting "Lockdown" is such a difficult time for us all, but I do believe there are a number of positives that come out of this. The way the community has come together, caring for those around them; the general feeling of "rallying around" we experience; the friendly greetings from those we meet on our exercise walks and so on. Then there's the support we see for the NHS and Carers, who have been under appreciated in the past and the millions that Captain Toms Moore's amazing appeal has raised for them. Let's pray that all these positives will remain when life gets back to normal. Paul spoke to the Corinthians of *Light shining out of the Darkness* – and so it shall!

The Stewardship Committee had planned some activities for later in the year, the Annual Fair at the end of August and a Weekend of Celebration in early September. Even though the current restrictions may be relaxed, we cannot be sure that these will take place, but we will be hoping to hold them as soon as we can.

In the meantime, God bless and keep safe and well.

George Smith, geoas0101@gmail.com

Funerals

In these exceptional days so much has been asked of each of us. No group has been asked more, however, than those who have faced grief and loss in these times of lockdown as they deal with the restrictions upon us all which have even affected how funeral services are now being held. Each family I have had the privilege of supporting in recent weeks going through such a time of loss, has shown immense dignity and understanding. Each has also been offered a memorial service for their loved one in the Church at a later date, should they wish. We will also be arranging a memorial service which will be open to all, at a future date. In the meantime, we hold all those who have lost loved ones in our prayers.

Robin Allison (Rev)

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die"

Mr Fred Sutton, Golf Drive, Port Seton. Funeral held at Prestonpans Cemetery on March 24th, 2020

Mr David Paton, Edinburgh Road, Port Seton. Funeral held at Prestonpans Cemetery on April 1st, 2020

Mr Francis Love, Thomson Crescent, Port Seton. Funeral held at Prestonpans Cemetery on 7th April 2020

Mrs Gwen Sked, Maxwell Court, Musselburgh. Funeral held at Prestonpans Cemetery on 14th April 2020

Mrs Janet Hawthorn, Drummohr Care Home, Wallyford. Funeral at Seafield Crematorium on 30th April 2020

Mr Stuart Johnston, Castle Avenue, Port Seton. Funeral at Seafield Crematorium on 5th May 2020

Church Finance

We want to thank you all for your ongoing generosity and support of the work of the congregation during these strange and unusual days. We received a legacy of **£5,740** in February and in March a refund of **£6,784** from HMRC for Gift Aid. These have been very welcome and have boosted our bank balance for the first quarter. However, on a normal basis, our expenditure will exceed our income. There are still costs that have to be met on a regular basis, the main one being our monthly contribution towards the Ministries & Mission of the church, as well as costs associated with the manse. We are grateful that a number of folk have now signed up to pay their weekly offerings through standing orders, and if you feel that you would be able to do that, this would be much appreciated. Please contact John Murdoch (812469), and he will be happy to advise. John can also give you a form for Gift Aid, if you are a taxpayer. As you will notice from the above receipt, this can make a huge difference at no additional cost to you. If you don't have Free Will Offering envelopes and would like to have them for your weekly gifts, contact Eleanor Willins (812616).

Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care within our congregation has taken on a whole different meaning in these strange times of Lockdown.

We are no longer meeting on Sundays and the many other times during the week. We are not able to visit people in their homes. For all of us this is difficult but maybe more so for those living on their own, those with close family in hospital only able to visit at the end of life, and for those with relatives in Care Homes.

We are very aware that Elders are keeping in close contact with people in their district and have given people their phone numbers to contact if necessary.

Robin, unable to visit, is spending a lot of time on the phone to people who are finding the time difficult. Especially difficult are times of bereavement when visits to arrange funerals are not allowed and the actual cremation and burial only attended by a few observing social distancing.

We are picking up that most people are being contacted regularly by someone in the congregation but if this is not the case we need to know.

It may be a bit yet until we can all meet up, so it is important that everyone feels part of the congregation. Again, please let us know of any needs and be aware that if you are feeling lonely or just need to speak to someone you can phone your elder or one of the following numbers.

Elizabeth Glover

Rev Robin Allison - 01875 812 225

Lyn Marshall - 01875 814 265

Elizabeth Glover - 01875 818 759

How to keep on Worshipping

So, how do we keep on worshipping during this time of lockdown? Here's a few suggestions...

It goes without saying that reading our Bibles is one way to keep our daily devotions going. If you don't have daily reading notes what about simply picking a gospel and reading it a chapter a day? Or why not go back to the stories of Moses or Joseph or Daniel and re-read them a bit at a time? The Psalms, too, are a rich resource of help, comfort and challenge. Another thing we can do is to pray. Around the country there have been occasional days when Christians have been asked to pause at 11am to say the Lord's prayer. Could this even become, for us, a daily practice? After all, Jesus prayer is perfect for daily use. God doesn't need lots of words!

Or, if you're on the internet, you can find our own Tom Gordon's daily reflections at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com/> I know many, myself included, start each day with Tom's thoughtful words.

For our own weekly worship we have been posting our own Podcast (a twenty minute or so audio broadcast) which you can find at <https://chalmersmemorialchurch2020.podbean.com/> Led mainly by myself, with occasional input from Tom Gordon, they contain prayers, bible readings and a short reflection. I post these to the internet around teatime on a Saturday. We've also been sending these out in printed form too and your elder can get them for you, if you wish. Recently we have also added a new way to listen to them - by Telephone! All you need to do is to dial **01875 444 495**. You will hear a short welcome message followed by a 20 second pause after which you will be able to listen to the broadcast on your phone. For our area, the 01875 number is the cost of a local rate call.

Our own Sheila Bulloch has been doing a great job too at keeping our Facebook page up to date with worship activities and songs. Not on Facebook? The good news is that you don't need to be a Facebook member to access the Church Facebook page which you can find at <https://en-gb.facebook.com/chalmersmemorial/>

And if you want to know what other Churches around Scotland are offering you can find web links at <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/services-online>

Robin Allison (Rev)

Community Resilience Information

The community council resilience team has been put into action with this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A Yellow hand 🖐️ leaflet with an emergency number **07783 643 105** was distributed - and this number can still be used anytime to request assistance, to collect shopping or prescription, ask advice on other issues or just reassurance during this time.

A number of issues were quickly identified in Cockenzie and Port Seton. Older people, who are self-isolating and have few friends or family locally that are able to go out for them, need support with food. Equally, families who are self-isolating and many who have lost a significant proportion of their income at the moment now need support. The community council, in partnership with staff at Port Seton Centre, and with **over 120 volunteers** that have come forward, now safely prepare and deliver food to those identified in our community. We are working closely with Cockenzie Primary School, John Bellany Day Centre, the Pennypit Trust, Harbour Medical Practice as well as local knowledge to ensure this support reaches those who need it most. The Church has donated **£500** to both the Community Resilience Group and The Pennypit Trust. There are still many folk who might need this service - if you know anyone that would benefit please contact Lyn or John Marshall - **814265 or 818181**.

Currently there are daily deliveries to **120 people** (and growing) and **72 children** are receiving weekly breakfast packs. Working from the Port Seton Centre collaboratively with the councils **Connected Communities** staff they are co-producing the daily food service which is a lifeline to people in the community. Additionally, there is also now a **Fairshare Foodbank** and **Community Larder** at the Centre where families or individuals who need immediate assistance with food or hygiene items can access these. At this time, it is necessary to call to arrange this assistance (818181) - but going forward the Centre will be a direct point of collaboration/distribution to those who have need of this service.

Lyn Marshall



Please recycle this newsletter and care for the earth as God intended