



Summer Reflections

Rev Robert Nicol

I was reading about an opinion survey conducted recently which found that only 6% of people in the UK want life to go back exactly to the way it was before the pandemic. Of course, there is a wide range of opinions about what should be different, but there is a longing to use the opportunity we have been given to craft a better society. There are parallels with the mood at the end of the Second World War.

Within the church there is a lively discussion underway about how things will be different in the way we worship. When we do eventually get back into our buildings on Sunday mornings, it will not feel the same as before: see the remarks by Alex Towns over the page. Some will not feel confident about coming out to church at all. That means we will need to go on offering on-line services, and many of us think these will remain as a permanent feature of church in the future. Apart from our regular attenders, we know there are others joining us on-line who wouldn't normally come through our doors; and we can't assume they will wish to do so after we reopen.

I hope you have been able to access the weekly services, either on-line or through the phone, and you have found them helpful. I have appreciated being able to do them in conjunction with our next-door parishes, both because they have the technology and know-how, and because it has been good to feel we are part of the wider church community in the Strath. I have particularly enjoyed seeing other people participating, and the photo montage. We are, I think, getting better at the production as we learn. However, the important thing is that we can feel we are joining in worship, and not just observing as viewers.

In common with the other churches, we are seeking the views of our congregations about what is

happening now and what you would like to see in the future, to help us to shape our worship and service as we gradually emerge from lockdown. **I would be very grateful if you would give it some thought and return the attached questionnaire with your views by Friday 17 July.**

It is a privilege to be your temporary minister in these times, and I am looking forward to the days when we will all be able to meet up again and share our worship in person.

Sandra Seath, our Outreach Co-ordinator, writes...

Another month has departed and a new one begins; phase 2 about to move to phase 3, self-isolation, shielding and social distancing have become part of our everyday life. They have made us look at one another differently and who knows how long it will be till handshaking and hugging return to our daily lives!

During our enforced isolation there's been time to listen, time to read, time to think and time to reason. There seems to be a public appetite for the development of a sustainable economy, sustainable energies, sustainable jobs and a caring and protection of God's world. A desire for the coming together of morality and quality around our economy and way of life post COVID-19!

These are challenging times and our church has had to adapt. Social media keep us in contact with local news, technology is used expertly to stream services and make church meetings happen, all ensuring folks, that we still have a connection and sense of belonging to our church and the wider community. Our church is very much alive and here for each one of us. This lockdown has brought us all together as we face this adversity; brought out the best in our creativity!

I am amazed at the evidence showing the viewing numbers for our streamed services which are listened to by people here at home and overseas, far more so than would ever have been reached by

traditional means.* Is this one among many of lockdown's experiences we don't want to lose?

As always, if you have any worries, queries, or require any kind of assistance please contact me on 01887 830316 and I will do my best to help. Hopefully, we will greet each other in the pews very soon! * <http://taylyonchurches.org.uk/>

CHURCH NEWS

Kenmore Kirk

Unfortunately, more dry rot and *flowery fungus* has been discovered within the fabric of the church at several places, causing much concern. Experts have been called, a meeting arranged and we await their advice. **Deep Cleaning** of the Kirk will occur once the current situation is understood.

Fortingall Kirk

By the end of June, comprehensive deep cleaning of the church will be complete. This has taken many hours of washing, wiping, mopping, Hoovering, removing, polishing and dusting! Despite this, lime continues to flake out of the stone in a fine dust! The spiders' webs between layers of glazing still remain, however. This requires more than a deep clean!! Our grateful thanks to Morag for seeing to all this work which we much appreciate.

Re-opening of our Churches

As it is the responsibility of the Scottish Government to provide a framework for the re-opening of churches to their congregations we should know more of this date after Phase 3 is announced on 9th July. Meanwhile, the Church of Scotland's COVID-19 guidance on this subject has been received.

Alex Towns Our Session Clerk writes.....

It would not be easy to meet all the requirements of the Church of Scotland Guidelines for the re-opening our churches, but we could do so.

However, this would entail every member and visitor to the church observing: social distancing, wearing face coverings and using hand sanitiser. All bibles and hymn books would have to be removed and no printed sheets could be issued. There would be no singing and pews would have to be taped off in places. Each church would have to be deep cleaned and disinfected before and after each service.

It would hardly be the church we know and love.

I feel we should not rush into opening at the first opportunity. It would appear that the COVID-19 situation is beginning to show signs of improvement so let us wait a bit longer in the hope that we can worship together in a happier climate. Meanwhile, we can continue to enjoy the online services which have been excellent.

With my very best wishes to you all, and until we meet again, stay safe and look after one another.

Alex Towns

AND NOW OTHER NEWS

Haymaking at Fortingall, 1930 - Neil Hooper

Last summer at Ardrasgairt we saw a gentleman showing some visitors the thatched cottages here. He introduced himself as Bill Bennett and explained that he was born at Ardrasgairt in 1931. He asked if we would be interested in some old family photos he had of their days in Fortingall, and wondered if the church would like to have the wallet that had been presented to his uncle, James Bennett, by the congregation in recognition of his many years of service as Sunday School Superintendent.



J & K Bennet

We were able to display these, together with pictures of haymakers in the fields in front of Ardrasgairt and Fortingall

A few weeks later Bill and Norma, who now live in Arbroath, brought the wallet together with a photo of Bill's uncle standing with his son Kenneth, later to be killed during the war in a flying-boat accident – you can see his name on the Fortingall War Memorial.



Bennet Wallet

at the *Doors Open Day* display at the Molteno Hall in September. From the ages of the family in the photos Bill has dated these photos to the year before his birth, i.e. 1930.



Fortingall Haymakers

The Ardrasgairt photo is interesting because the cottages in the background have no dormer windows in the thatch. We knew that the dormers had been put in sometime after the 1920s, and



Ardrasgairt haymakers

this photo proves that this was done after 1930. The bathrooms must have been added to the cottages then too, as Bill says his mother recollected having to fetch water from an outdoor tap.

It is such a pleasant feature of our parishes that people now living in far flung places like to share their family memories of their birth and childhood here.

LOCKDOWN STORY - Fran Gillespie

“So all morning, there was Charlie up on the roof, singing and swearing, and we couldn’t get him to come down. So at last...”

Nowadays, due to social distancing we’re often obliged to overhear other people’s conversations, with voices raised over the obligatory two metres. And very interesting some of them are too.

I’d willingly have listened to more of this one, between two ladies behind me in the queue outside the Co-op, but at that point I was beckoned forward. Reluctantly I scuttle inside the store and collect my trolley, wondering who Charlie could possibly be. The roofer? Impossible. An inebriated male of her acquaintance? But what on earth was he doing on her roof?

Pondering this enigma, I get out my shopping list, only to find it’s the one from the week before last. The current one is still on the kitchen table. So I make a nuisance of myself going against the flow when I get as far as the dairy section and remember that what I really need is half a dozen oranges and a bag of carrots. I’m so preoccupied with the extraordinary behaviour of Charlie that I’m nearly home before I remember that we’re almost out of porage oats.

The following week, armed with the right list this time, I’m in the queue outside the Co-op again, listening to odd snatches of chat. The woman in front looks vaguely familiar. Where have I seen her before? She recognises a friend further along the queue and says, “ We’ve just bought a parrot called Charlie.”

LOCKDOWN BLUES - Peter Gillespie [age 9]

It’s a horrible time
When we can’t see friends
And the sun doesn’t shine.

The shops are closed,
The playground too,
And we can’t get clothes.

But don’t be down –
If we work together
We will not frown.

We’re not alone,
If you’re feeling sad
Just pick up the phone.