

FOCUS

Portsoy Church Magazine



February 21—March 2021

Letter from the Locum



As we carry on into 2021, I wonder how we are coping with life? In our typically understated NE way, many of us may say we are "chavvin awa," or "makin' the most of it." Certainly just getting through 2020 was an achievement in itself. And although I don't think we can compare our virus affected year with the dangers of war time there was something of a "war time spirit" in the way communities, including our own, sought to pull together and support each other.

There was also a high level of compliance with government regulations and restrictions, which we are told even surprised those in power.

I do wonder what lay behind that acceptance of the loss of freedoms to travel, meet and work? Freedoms which I could never have imagined would be taken from us. Certainly there was an element of selflessness - willingly sacrificing our previous way of life to help protect the most vulnerable, but whether those in power, with the most influence over the lifestyle changes we were told to make, or just ordinary folk like us, who mostly did what they told us to do, I believe fear played a part.

Fear of a virus we could not see; the risks to our health; the media portraying it as the "deadly virus", and the daily figures of deaths and new cases... all enough to make the most healthy (and brave) stop and think.

But, behind such a fear lay the biggest fear of all the fear of death.

Ok you may be reading is with no such fear because death is something you just accept as part of human existence. But even then is there no uncertainty in you of what comes next? Not many of us have the assurance of the total unbelieving atheist who can say, "when you're dead you're dead." And even to those, I would

respectfully ask, "how can you prove that you are right?"

Mind you even those with belief can shake at the contemplation of eternity. For instance, the first disciples of Jesus, while firmly convinced that there was a God, and even that he had sent Jesus to be among them, spent the period immediately after the crucifixion of Jesus together in a locked room for fear of what fate awaited them.

But it is significant that when Jesus then appeared to them, he gave them no criticism for their lack of faith, instead his first words were "peace be with you." Indeed on previous occasions when they had shown such fear he would comfort them to "fear not." On hearing such responses from Jesus, we may be asking ourselves "how can he have been so confident as to tell them that they had no need to fear and instead could have peace in their hearts?"

Of course such advice is empty unless the fear and anxiety can be replaced with something better.

Years later, in a letter to some friends, John (one of those same disciples) told us what that "something better" was: "Perfect love drives out fear." To know the love of God, as he did through his subsequent faith and trust in Jesus, meant he could face death (and life) without fear.

Returning to the present, it has been encouraging to hear people saying of our present troubles that "we will get through this." But with the best will in the world, there is still much uncertainty ahead.

How much better to face it with the certainty that comes from knowing the perfect love of God, through faith and trust in Jesus?

Best wishes

Steve Hay

To contact me ring 07926 773607 or just let your elder know.

Covid-19 Virus: Update

Church Centre closed again

With the latest restrictions the Church is closed for worship probably until at least the middle of February. Please look out on the website and the notice board outside the Church for information on when we might be open again. We can, however, hold funerals in the building again which is some comfort for families in the middle of winter. Attendance is restricted to close family and friends with a maximum of 20 at the service. We realise this is difficult for people wishing to pay their respects, but hope there is understanding in these very unusual times.

Church Family News

CFN is still replaced temporarily by a weekly Church Bulletin containing a message from Steve Hay, our usual weekly prayer topic, and other information. There is a link to the bulletin on the Church Family News page of our website. There is also a copy on the notice board outside the Church Centre. Steve Hay is delivering copies to those who don't have internet access or do not wish to leave their homes. Please contact Steve Hay on 07926 773607 if you would like a copy delivered.

Social contact

Elders are still available if you wish to talk about any issues or just have a news. However Steve Hay is more than happy for you to ring him at any time to talk.

Sunday service live

We are now streaming a live service from the Church every Sunday morning at 10.30am. Please join us if you can. The service can be found on the "Weekly Video" page of the Church website. If you are unable to join us a video of the service will be posted on the same page on Sunday afternoon for you to view at your leisure. All previous services for the last two months are also available on the same page.

As before we are also producing CDs and DVDs of the service which are available free of charge. Steve also distributes these, so please let him know if you would like a DVD or CD.

Covesea and Guildry Houses

Feeling blessed by your generosity.

Your contributions meant we were able to deliver a total of 10 bags of food items, toiletries and Christmas treats to Guildry House and Covesea House on the 21st December.

A Big 'Thank You' for your help. It makes a real difference.

From The Pastoral Care Team

*Thank
you*

COVID 19

The current lockdown means that people may feel isolated and in need of practical and spiritual help.

Sadly we are unable to offer face to face help at this time but we can still talk over the phone.

We are here to support and help whenever we can.

Steve Hay : 07926773607

Olwen Christie : 07813529280

Funerals

27 Nov Robert Lange

Rita Milne

31 Dec Bill Wood

6 Jan Ali Hutcheson

7 Jan Iris Cook

21 Jan John Murray

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Message from the Manse

Friends, I'm so pleased to be delivering this, my first ever 'message from the manse.' As I write, I've been here almost two weeks, I'm settling in well and it feels like home already. It's often said that moving house is one of the most stressful life events we experience and while for many people that holds true, it's not that way for everyone. For me, at least, any odd stressful moments were far outweighed by the excitement and anticipation of finally arriving in Portsoy. And when I did get here, to find a meal in the fridge (which lasted a couple of days) and a much-needed hamper of essentials, well, any tension just melted away. Many thanks to those of you who provided these, by the way!

The only really stressful moment I can remember actually came on my second afternoon in the manse. As I took a break from unpacking, still surrounded by boxes, some half-empty and some still full, I sat in what has become my living room enjoying a coffee and I could distinctly hear the sound of a seagull. Nothing unusual in that, I thought, I'm living near the sea now. But the sound was coming from the chimney flue. Some poor bird must have got itself stuck. I knelt before the fireplace, wondering what to do - should I call someone? I couldn't imagine Portsoy Fire Brigade being too happy at me calling them out to free a gull from my chimney...

After a time, the stress melted away when I realised that the bird wasn't in the chimney, it was simply perched on the pot at the top, enjoying the warmth rising up, and the sound was carrying down into the grate. Such relief! And since then, I've regularly hear the cawing of that seagull quietly echoing around the living room.

I can't see the seagull (okay, I know it won't always be the same one!) but I know it's there, and it's become quite a comfort. And I suppose that's the way it is with us just now. I can't see you, but I know

it's there, and it's become quite a comfort. And I suppose that's the way it is with us just now. I can't see you, but I know you're there and that comforts me. And I'd like to think that you knowing I'm here in Portsoy comforts you too. One day, and please God let it be soon, we'll be together in person to share the warmth we each have to offer.

John

Portsoy Church Fairtrade

Just a quick note to thank all the lovely people who have kept supporting our Fairtrade shop over this difficult time of lockdown and anxiety. Please do continue to do so if you can. I have many of the usual food items in stock - pasta, rice, sugar, tea, coffee, cookies and - of course - the all-important chocolate! Also no shortage of toilet rolls so far. Please contact me to place an order. I am happy to deliver to your door, or you can collect from my house if you prefer. I'm expecting a new catalogue to be out soon and will distribute them to regular customers. If you would like me to add you to my distribution list, please phone or email me. Margaret 01261 843125 margaret.whewell@btopenworld.com

Crossreach Magazines

The latest edition of "Crossreach News", full of interesting and inspiring articles, is now available. Usually you would be able to pick one up at Church, but at this time we cannot make sure that you receive a copy in that way. If you would like a copy delivered to your door, or posted to you, please contact our Session Clerk, Yvonne McKay, or Margaret Whewell and we'll be delighted to get one to you.

Yvonne: 07592 395581 or email: yvo59@live.co.uk

Margaret: 01261 843125 or 07870 124654 email:

margaret.whewell@btopenworld.com



Prayer Focus

"(God) comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in trouble." 2 Corinthians 1:4

I think it goes without saying that our whole world is so sad, fearful and sorrowing at this time. Who would have thought, even in our wildest dreams, that such a pandemic would have affected everybody and caused so much heartache and pain, loss of life and separation from loved ones and friends.

Thinking of all that has happened, many must be asking the question Why?. This surely, must be a testing time for all when we are feeling numb and shocked. But, in our despair, there is hope.

There may be deep troubled times that we must go through. In the midst of them, God promises to be our companion and faithful friend. While we wait for that comfort, we can be assured that God will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability to bear trials. He will "perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10) Heartache has a way of pointing us to Jesus, who shares in our sufferings and can bring meaning to seemingly senseless pain.

Despite these sad times we have great hope. When the burdens of this world becomes too much we can look to our heavenly Father. He lovingly offers help and love.

Father, we bring before You all who are feeling hopeless, bowed down with grieving, pain and sorrowing. Lord, You know their burdens, trials and losses. Please care for every soul that cries. Wipe away their tears.

May they be assured that there is a day coming when there will be no more heartaches, no more clouds in the sky and no more tears. All will be at peace forever more. We pray that they will put their trust in You for only You can bring hope in the darkest of times.

Amen

Flower Rota

Thank you very much to all those who are on the flower rota, or give money for flowers to be placed in church each week. Diane, who has faithfully organised the rota for many years, is now taking a well-earned rest from the job.

During the present lockdown I am trying to update the rota, and it would be most helpful if those who are on it would contact me to let me know if they are happy to continue to be on the list. **(01261 843125)** I would also be delighted to hear from anyone who might like to add their name to the rota, or from a volunteer to take on the job of maintaining the rota. If you think you might be that person, please give me a ring

Looking forward to hearing from you all. Margaret Whewell

FOCUS DEADLINE

The next edition of Focus will cover April—May 2021. Please let Johanna Sturrock have articles and any photographs for inclusion no later than Sunday 14th March. unicornathome@gmail.com.

Portsoy Church Guild

Hello Guild friends. With the present lockdown, hopes of being able to meet as a Guild before the current session ends in March have been dashed. We now look ahead to our new session in September, and hope to be able to resume meeting then.

Sheila has optimistically provisionally booked the Church Centre for Boat Festival Teas and a Thrift Shop! These are always our two main fundraisers, so let's pray that they may happen this summer. Our funds were healthy enough for us to be able to make a donation to the church as usual last year, and also to send a donation to the Guild Projects. Sheila has also paid the capitation fees that were due, but that means the Guild account is very low now, and no more donations will be possible for a while.

Many Guilds are raising money for various good causes by having "virtual" coffee times, or eating their soup together via Zoom. If any of you have any good ideas for how we might do something similar, please let me know.

Our second knitted blanket is almost finished. Blanket one is pictured opposite. So we have two single bed-size blankets, and two smaller ones which have also been donated - already sewn up - hooray! Unless anyone has a better suggestion, after researching a number of possibilities, I shall be sending the blankets to Knit for Peace, a charity based in London which sends knitted goods to many people in need, both in the UK and abroad. If any of you would like more details about the charity, please contact me and I'll tell you more. For those of you online, the website is: www.knitforpeace.org.uk They have free patterns to knit for charity, and a pattern for a dressing-gown made from knitted squares.

I hope that you are all managing to stay cheerful during this trying time. It's heartening to know that a number of our members have had their first dose of the vaccine, but we must all continue to take care

for some time yet. I'm sure you are all looking out for each other, but if any of you feel like a chat at any time, do feel free to phone me. 01261 843125.

Best wishes, and blessings to you all, Margaret Whewell (Secretary)



Church finances

Our finances are still being significantly affected by the further closure of the Church and the continued closure of the Church Centre for other activities. A very big thank you to everyone who is donating to church funds. Your help is very much appreciated.

If you are able to give a little more during these difficult times it would help the Church to get through to better times when we can open fully again. Thank you also to those who have made arrangements for their regular donations to continue perhaps by changing to standing orders or by sending cheques or cash to the Treasurer.

World Day of Prayer

This year's World Day of Prayer Service is written by the Christian women of Vanuatu - a group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean. Although Covid restrictions may well stop us holding our usual service, plans are afoot for an online service, available to watch when convenient for people. We also hope to record it and produce CD and DVD versions, just as we do for our Sunday services at the moment.

Every year I find the World Day of Prayer service so informative, and very moving, as I learn about people in the parts of the world that I have often never heard of, and find new things to pray about. I have participated in WDP services for many years now, and they never disappoint. And I love to think about the wave of prayer and praise taking place all round the world, some while we are asleep. As the hymn which closes the service every year says:

As o'er each continent & island the dawn leads on another day,
the voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the song of praise away.
The sun that bids us rest is waking your children 'neath the western
sky,
and hour by hour fresh lips are making your wondrous deeds resound
on high.

Every year it brings tears to my eyes.

The service is planned for 5th March. I'll post details of time, and how to access it on the Church website as soon as I know, and a poster on the Church Centre noticeboard. You can also find out more by visiting the Scottish World Day of Prayer website: www.wdpscotland.org.uk
Nearer the time, I will be happy to distribute copies of the service booklet.

Margaret Whewell

Coffee and Company

Back in October 2004, at a meeting of the Outreach Group, some members brought forward the idea of reaching out to the people of our town who were on their own, and who might appreciate the opportunity of meeting for coffee and friendship. It was decided to give it a try. At the beginning we set up a few tables in the Hall Reading Room and served coffee, tea and biscuits. To our surprise so many turned up that within five weeks we had to move in to the large hall....and so "Coffee and Company" came into being.

Coffee and Company was not about making money and we did not charge them for their coffee. It was about getting along side the people in a caring way and to try and show God's love in serving them. However, we began to find money left on the tables and elsewhere so in time we had to put out a box for any donations people wanted to give as they wished. Over the years the money went towards the benefit of our Church and various charities locally and abroad. In the past few years we have concentrated on donating to Child Care International in Vietnam where our local lad, Ken Rae, has dedicated his life to the poorest of people there.

Sadly, with the covid virus all has come to a stop and these people are losing out because of it.

If you feel that you would like to help them again at this tragic time, you can do so by popping a donation in my mail box at 2 Durn Avenue or Margaret Whewell's one at 14 South High Street. These would be gratefully appreciated.

God bless

Edith Stuart



Please contact Olwen Christie (Pastoral Care Convener) on 01261 843 680 if you know of anyone who is ill at home or in hospital (especially Dr Gray's in Elgin as we are not notified).

Community Diary:

A diary of local events has been placed in the Portsoy Ice Cream Shop for use by everyone. This will enable event organisers to check that the date and time of their event will not clash with another already planned.

Please pass this on to any other local groups. To work effectively everyone will need to check the diary and ensure their own event is entered in it.

A Christian book lending library is available in the meeting room at the Church Centre.

If you see something you fancy reading, just put your name in the register, borrow the book and sign it back in when you're finished.



PRAYER CIRCLE

Name:
(Not necessary)

Please pray for:
.....
.....

Please place completed slip in box at church door or hand to the minister or Edith Stuart.

Directory

Interim Moderator Rev Kevin Gruer
Tel: 01888 563850
E-mail: kgruer@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session Clerk Mrs Yvonne McKay, Bayview, Sandend.
Tel: 07592 395 581
E-mail: Yvonne@therealmckay.co.uk

Treasurer Mrs Ishbel Mackinnon, 24, Kirkwood Crescent,
Portsoy Tel: 07969 697362
E-mail: ishbel.mackinnon@btinternet.com

Please note temporarily while Ishbel is moving house Ian Whewell
(address below) is standing in for her

Gift Aid Convener Mr Ian Whewell, Eynhallow, 14 South High
Street, Portsoy. Tel:01261 843125
E-mail: ian.whewell@btinternet.com

Church Website Mr Ian Whewell - as above

Church Centre Convener Mr Ian Whewell - as above
(For bookings)

Centre Caretaker Mrs Sarah Willis, 40, Gordon Crescent,
Portsoy
Tel:01261 843928 or 07756535731
E-mail: sarahsfamily@btinternet.com

Focus Mrs Johanna Sturrock
21 Hill Street, Portsoy. Tel: 01261 843009
E-mail: unicornathome@gmail.com

DIRECTORY (CONTINUED)

Pastoral Care Group Convener	Olwen Christie	01261 843680
Outreach Group Convener	Paul Williams	01261 842338
Finance & Property Group Convener	Ian Whewell	01261 843125
Social Group Convener	Helen D'Arcy	01261 842340
Administration Group Convener	Anne McArthur	01261 842474

Service Times

Every Sunday at 10.30am unless otherwise intimated

Currently attendance at services in the Church is not permitted due to Covid 19 but services are being streamed live and recordings available on the Church website as below. Please see also Page 4 for details

Website—<http://www.portsoychurch.org>

+++

Scottish Charity No: SC 000522