

West Linton St Andrew's Parish Church

April 2020

Scottish Charity No SC003938

Interim Minister: Rev Stewart McPherson

From our Interim Minister ...

The number of times we have heard the word 'unprecedented' used in recent weeks must be unprecedented! There are other words which, to our surprise, are now in common use, such as, quarantine, lockdown, self-isolation, social distancing, all of which have a rather negative meaning. Although, perhaps having an anxiety-inducing tone, they have a health and wellbeing purpose. There are also Coronavirus and Covid19 which are new additions to our language but quite undesired, however, now that they have entered our vocabulary, they are here to stay.

The phrase 'panic-buying' is not new but perhaps never been used with such regularity nor with such anger. Although panic-buying is not the same as greedy buying. When told we must stay at home for weeks and you have a family, then there is an instinctive anxiety which may cause a bit of panic in getting enough food in the cupboards to survive and also remain 'safe at home' for as long as possible. However, the greed and selfishness of some is evident. Meanwhile the foodbanks (a phrase all too familiar in recent years in the UK) run short.

By the time you receive this, the tone of language may have changed again. The words 'stay at home' may be used in a far more commanding tone and the thoughts of the army or police rationing the trolleys at Tesco does not seem so far-fetched.

We may need to rediscover and resurrect some traditional words which

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

have held people in and through difficult times down the generations: such as hope, compassion, neighbourliness, and faith. Words of encouragement and of kindness are more difficult at a time when we have to keep a distance and therefore have fewer conversations, and we do not even want to bump into anyone during a necessary but quick trip to the shops. So, the old-fashioned telephone comes into its own, as do the recent innovations in social media which can help us keep in touch, exchange greetings, continue to do necessary work and tasks even if from your home while still in your pyjamas.

The other word to hold on to and which we can action is 'prayer'. Whatever our personal form and pattern, this is an enforced but opportune time to pray for our world, for leaders, for our community, our family and ourselves. It is something we can rediscover and as we do it in isolation we are so aware that we do not pray alone. We are in the company of God, of each other, and what is beautifully called 'The Communion of Saints'.

And it is a time to remember the most common phrase in the whole of scripture, "Do not be afraid!" Words spoken to prophets, to shepherds, and to two women early on an Easter morning are words for us to hear, to hold, and to share as we travel through these unprecedented times.

An ancient Gaelic Blessing

God to enfold you,
God to surround you,
God in your speaking,
God in your thinking.
God in your sleeping,
God in your waking,
God in your watching,
God in your hoping.

Stewart McPherson

New Time for Services ...

Members of our congregation who attended the St Andrew's Church Stated Annual Meeting on 8th March, will be aware that there was an overwhelming decision in favour of moving our service time permanently from 11:15am to 11:30am on Sunday mornings. This change of time has been discussed on various occasions over the past few years, most recently last Autumn and the new time has been on trial since the start of January. The trial has been a great success and allows the minister or worship leader valuable time to speak with members of the Newlands or Carlops congregation following their service, before coming to lead the morning service at St Andrews.

In formalising the change, I subsequently received a message from Prof Murray Campbell: "It is very good to hear of the unanimous decision of your SAM yesterday to continue with the holding of Sunday morning worship in St Andrew's Church at 11.30am. Could you please pass on to the congregation the warm thanks of the Kirk Session and congregation at Carlops for this generous and helpful decision, which we appreciate was taken out of friendly concern for the other two congregations in the linkage."

After agreeing this change and in view of the current situation, we have had to cancel services completely for the time being. As we know though, worship can happen in many different ways beyond our church walls. Let's celebrate that and pray that we may be worshipping together again in St Andrew's soon.

Tony Hoskins, Session Clerk

Finance Report - Accounts for 2019 ...

At the Stated Annual Meeting on 8 March I indicated that the congregational accounts showed a broadly satisfactory position for the year ending 31 December 2019. Income was slightly ahead of expenditure, resulting in a modest net gain during 2019 of £574 (2018: a deficit of just over £4,400).

Income from the congregation's regular giving, by weekly FreeWill Offering (FWO) and/or Gift Aid donations, was up 3% compared to 2018 and hall letting income was up around 20%. Expenditure for the year was largely routine, particularly as we were fortunate not to have had to face significant property repair costs.

I mentioned that in effect we were really just 'paying our way' and, with the ever-present potential for unexpected additional costs for property maintenance, it would be important that we do what we can to maintain (or increase) income levels and to manage expenditure carefully.

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Few could have imagined that, just a little over a week later, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic would have resulted in the suspension of Sunday services and the enforced cancellation of hall letting arrangements for the foreseeable future. While clearly this is first and foremost a significant health risk, not just for our community but throughout the world, the absence of weekly offerings (average £300 per week) and hall rent income (average £250 per week) will have an adverse effect on the church's cashflow position, making it difficult to meet ongoing fixed expenses in the short term.

While we would hope that weekly offerings might be largely recovered when Sunday services are able to resume, the same is not true of hall letting income that will be foregone over the next few months. Whilst

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

recognising that Covid-19 might create financial worries for some, whether from concerns over job security and/or rising prices, where possible we would ask you to please give serious consideration as to whether you might be able to assist by:

- giving by monthly Standing Order (for online banking purposes, the Church's bank account has
Sort Code: 80-09-39,
Account Number: 00817827,
Account Name: 'St Andrew's Kirk Session'
or alternatively please ask for a Standing Order form to complete and return);
- making up missed payments when Sunday services resume (FWO envelopes for the year from 1 April 2020 are currently being distributed and may be helpful for weekly budgeting purposes) – if you don't currently use FWO envelopes but would like to start then please ask;
- completing a Gift Aid declaration (if you are a tax-payer) to enable the Church to recover an extra 25% of your donations at no extra cost to you - again please ask if you would like a declaration form to sign, date and return. To enable the appropriate amount of tax to be recovered, the amount of your donations would need to be identifiable, either as Standing Order payments or donations given by way of FWO envelopes.

For enquiries on any of the above points please email treasurer@standrews-westlinton.org.uk or call 660977.

Thank you for your financial support during 2019 and, in advance, for helping us to face the financial challenges that 2020 appears set to bring.

Michael Knott, Treasurer

Christian Aid Update ...

CA Week 2019 raised £7.5m. This money was well spent to help improve the terrible maternal and neonatal infant mortality situation in Sierra Leone, the world's most dangerous country to give birth in.

- 58,000 people given access to new well-built health clinics where nurses could save lives
- 64,000 people trained in hygiene practices helping mums and children fight off illnesses and live healthier lives
- 13,000 women given the means to pay for transport to their nearest clinic through community savings groups

CA Week 10-16th May 2020

This year's campaign will focus on Rose who is 67 and lives in eastern Kenya. When she was a child, Rose remembers how often the rain would fall giving fruit to the trees and providing plenty of nutritious food to eat. Now, drought is robbing her of the chance to farm. She and her family are hungry. Sadly, millions like her in Kenya are desperately struggling to survive the severe drought, it's now a national emergency. Every day, without any breakfast, she sets out on a long and dangerous journey to collect water for her family. When she returns exhausted later in the day, she has no energy to do anything else. This is Rose's climate crisis.

Your gifts could help Rose's community build a dam to provide a long-lasting reliable water supply to reliably grow fresh vegetables for her family to eat and see her grandchildren grow up and live life to the full. No more exhausting treks for water.

Find out more at caweek.org where donations can be made.

With every gift, every prayer, every voice we can stop this climate crisis.

Robert Higgins

The Open Gate ...

Due to concerns about the corona virus, for the next 3 months, the Open Gate will not have a physical presence in Newlands Centre on Friday afternoons .

However, we will now make ourselves available throughout the week for counselling support by telephone, using our existing Open Gate contact 07535 898 244.

These are stressful times, so please use this resource if you feel that you are needing a bit of help in coping.

Margaret Habeshaw

Food Banks ...

The coronavirus has wrought many changes to our life style, one of which is that there will no longer be a food collection point in church. However, the Food Banks in Peebles and Penicuik are facing increased demand and difficulty in obtaining supplies. Should you wish to continue support, you may do so with a direct cash donation on-line or place items in supermarket collection points. Emergency requests within our community will continue to be met via our Food Assist phone carried by our under 70 volunteers.

If anyone would like to make a direct cash donation to the Food Bank operating from St Mungo's in Penicuik, the bank details are:

Account Name: Food Facts Friends Project

Sort Code: 83-26-10

Account No: 00709837

You might like to put 'St Andrew's, West Linton' as the Reference for your donation.

This account is an account dedicated to the Food Bank.

Contact during 'Lockdown' ...

I had hoped to get this issue of the Newsletter out for distribution before the 'Lockdown' was imposed but this has not happened.

During the period until we can 'resume normal service' our Interim Minister, Stewart McPherson will be sending out occasional emails to keep the congregation updated on congregational matters and to provide spiritual support. Inevitably, this will only reach those for whom he has an email address.

Any member or adherent who would like to receive these emails and who has not already received the first email from Stewart should send an email with their email address to:

SMcPherson@churchofscotland.org.uk

In addition, there is a community help group who may be able to help with shopping for any in the 'at risk' groups. The initial contact numbers are Kate Whalley, 07973 501665, or Christine Leith, 07899 971025.

Colin Herd, Editor

This may be the last Newsletter until the Coronavirus restrictions are lifted. Regular contributors will be notified of the next publication date when that is known. newsletter@standrews-westlinton.org