

**St. Margaret's Community Church of
Scotland**

Dunfermline

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Dear All,

I was deeply saddened last week to learn of the death of Ravi Zacharias at the relatively young age of 74 – he was one of the most engaging preachers I have ever listened to and a lovely, gracious man as well as a wonderful author. We lost our own David Paxton, just a few years older than Ravi and will miss his presence in church and in our lives.

This calls for perspective. We might live to 100, like Margaret Hutchison [and our warmest congratulations to her] but at whatever age we pass from this world, the tragedy of death hits us hard.

In our readings from Mark's Gospel, we have reached the point of the tragedy and injustice of both the death, and the manner of the death, of our Lord Jesus – a real event in history at the young age of 34. His death did happen, and not like the Qu'ran which states, "They did not kill him, neither did they crucify him; it only seemed to be so" [Sura 4:157].

Why was His death, and the manner of His death so important? We have to admit that our mistakes have a cost and accept that Jesus paid for them on our behalf – that is both the mystery and the reality of the Cross. When we stand in the presence of a Cross in one of our churches, the words of that age-old hymn come thundering back to us;

"It was for us He hung and suffered there."

We are too, reminded of the words of the same hymn;

"He died that we might be forgiven, he died to make us good, that we might go at last to heaven, saved by His precious blood."

As well as standing before a Cross, I believe our churches should have the image of an empty tomb too! That empty tomb powerfully reminds us of His triumph over death and of the promise of eternal life to all who believe in Him.

We have a clear perspective. Sadly, those who deny either that the Cross has any meaning or that it ever happened, are denying to themselves the reality of forgiveness; but they too are denying the reality of what followed – to put it into Jesus' own words:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though their bodies die and whoever lives their life believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Do you see the last sentence? To believe in Him is to have captured the reality of eternal life by faith. No Cross, no empty tomb – no forgiveness and no hope. Alternatively, a personal understanding of the Cross and an acknowledgement of its outcome over our broken lives leads too to the outcome of the empty tomb and eternal life.

That is the perspective we have as people of faith. The final outcome is glorious, both however and whenever we leave this life. Covid 19 may instil the fear of death in many but for the Lord's people there is no fear for we are in the hands of the One who has conquered death for us.

Iain

The Future

When are we going to be able to meet again in Church? That is a difficult question to answer as much will depend on the guidance of the Scottish Government.

There is every evidence that the virus more easily spreads through contact indoors than outside – this makes a church service a place of some vulnerability.

We might be able to have limited meetings by the end of the summer but they will be subject to restrictions – 2 metre spacing on either side – in our case a service of no more than 40 or so people. Iain and Gordon are working on how we might shape such services when they do take place – probably 2 every Sunday to accommodate all of us initially at least.

Here then is the plan up till then:

1. We will continue to produce a weekly newsheet to keep you up to date and hopefully provide spiritual support. Currently we reach 170 people this way through email – if you have an email address could you please let either Iain or Irene know what it is, otherwise you will receive a paper copy.
2. We will use Facebook – a daily Bible Reading for those who want to tune in and the Bible Study [currently Jonah] on Wednesday evening and a Thought for the Week on Sunday morning. How do you get Facebook? Simply go on line through your phone, computer or tablet and, type in Facebook, and then download the app. Create an account and you are good to go.
3. We are going to experiment with Zoom – this is a simple way of

meeting face to face – our Kirk Session Executive has already met 3 times using this platform. Next week I am going to set up one of the talks/services on Zoom and invite those of you who have appliances to join a meeting.

4. How does Zoom work. Again, go on line and type in Zoom; download it and that is it. When you get an invitation to join a meeting through email, just click on that 5 minutes before the meeting and I will click you in.

It is all a learning experience for us but these new ways will now be incorporated into the future life of the church, whatever happens.

The Present

How is the Church doing? We are trying to make a difference – a communication has gone into every home in Halbeath and the same will happen in Touch next week. We are trying to keep contact by email and phone with all our members and through the various means I outlined earlier.

We are actively planning, as a Kirk Session, the future shape of the church and will also, in July, make contact with every home in Garvock, followed by Linburn and Transy.

Financially we are significantly behind. Thank you to people who are now giving by standing order and cheque – this has made a difference – but we have lost income from those who give by envelope and by the loss of income from the café and other means. Whatever you can do to help in this respect will be appreciated.

Generally speaking we are coping well and rely on your continued support, prayer and encouragement.