

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

Dunfermline

Iain Greenshields, Tel: 07427477575

Email: revimaclg@hotmail.co.uk

17th July 2020 Newsletter

Dear All,

Conflict is an inevitable fact of life. People will not always see eye to eye on everything and indeed can find themselves at loggerheads because of deep felt differences of opinion.

The Church has always had its fair share of conflicts but on too many occasions not handled them that well.

This week, in the book of Acts we read about a conflict between two fine men:

"³⁶ After some time Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let's go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing.'³⁷ Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. ³⁸ But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. ³⁹ Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus."

Here were two men who got on exceptionally well but differed so much in their disagreement, they went their separate ways. Why?

It was a disagreement about a young man called John Mark [the eventual writer of Mark's Gospel]. He had deserted Paul and Barnabas when they had faced opposition. Paul felt he was a liability but Barnabas wanted to give him another chance. What to do? How would you see it?

I think this is one of these times when Paul was wrong and Barnabas was spot on. I can see Paul's point of view but surely the Christian faith is always about giving someone a second [and third, and fourth....] chance? It is not all about forgiveness and grace?

How then are we to deal with profound differences of opinion and disputes? I believe we truly need to try and see where the other person is coming from. It is imperative, even if we cannot ever agree with someone, that we try and appreciate their point of view. Second, love, even for our enemies, is called for by Jesus! We cannot wriggle our way out of that imperative.

We cannot always be right! We need to remind ourselves of that! We cannot always get our own way!

There is nothing more damaging to a relationship, a church, a society, that unresolved conflict. We are called to be a people who forgive, who offer grace and who live out mercy. That does not mean that we are careless and forget – but it does mean that in our remembering we engage in constant reconciliation borne out of love.

Paul and Barnabas eventually sort it out and God even brings good out of this poor situation. As we seek to move forward in St. Margaret's may we do so in grace and understanding. The future will be different, but different does not mean either worse or better – just different! May God give us the grace to work together and establish something good and significant for both our church and community and may we never be weighed down and held back by differences of opinion and style.

Iain

Intimations

I have been trying to reason out how we might move forward in the light of the Government's latest advice and linked this to the Church of Scotland's Guidance.

I would hope that everything should be ready to "go" for a return to some sort of church service by Sunday 9th August. My plan is this:

10.15am Zoom Service for those who feel they cannot yet return to Church.

11.00am Church Service with appropriate social distancing – no singing but there will be worship and the service will be either livestreamed through Facebook or the Website – this can be picked up at any time after the service.

Continue to make contact that covers everyone through the Newsletter and continue daily readings on Facebook for those who feel this is profitable.

We need to note that at this time the only permission being given is for a return to worship.

"It doesn't matter what the issue might be, whether it's a style of music or dropping a Sunday evening service – when one group senses it's losing control to another, conflict begins. But that's where good theology can save us from disunity and disharmony. Biblical theology teaches us that the church belongs to Jesus Christ, the Head, the Lord of his people...those who insist on trying to maintain ownership of a local church as if it's a hamburger franchise are guilty of rebellion. It's not their church, it's not the pastor's church" – Robert Moeller

The conflict between good and evil is drama, but the conflict between good and good is tragedy – Anon

The mark of community – true biblical unity – is not the absence of conflict. It's the presence of a reconciling spirit – Bill Hybels

If repentance is real and confession is genuine, we cannot simply choose to forgive some sins and not others. That's forgiveness by degree. Pick and choose forgiveness is not something we want from God. None of us wants him to forgive some of our sins and not others. Yet this is how we respond to others. If we want God's forgiveness to the fullest extent, we must forgive to the fullest extent – Woodrow Kroll

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, was reminded one day of a vicious deed that someone had done to her years before. But she acted as if she had never even heard of the incident. "Don't you remember it?" her friend asked. "No," came Barton's reply, "I distinctly remember forgetting it."

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong - Mahatma Gandhi
