

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

Dunfermline

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How often have you walked into the Doctor's surgery to be asked the question, "How are you today?"

I have often felt that question to, on the one hand be a pleasant piece of conversation, and on the other to be pretty facile – after all you would not be likely to be in the doctor's surgery if you were feeling well and had just popped in for a wee chat!

Of course it is the same when people ask how we are and we answer that we are ok, when quite the reverse is true – or worse, when people tell us how well we look and we are feeling lousy!! Either people can be careless, we can be untruthful or appearances can be deceptive.

For our daily readings and our Sunday "thoughts" whether on Zoom or Facebook, we have been looking at the book of Acts. I have found the whole experience fascinating. Here was Paul, in particular, against opposition from Jews and Romans alike planting these young shoots of Christian communities. They appeared such vulnerable non-entities in relation to the bigger picture of the world in which they were being formed – doomed to failure.

The point is, that this was the work, not just of Paul, but of the Holy Spirit. This young church, the majority of whom were poor or slaves was going to steadily grow into the world-wide entity it is today.

We are concerned about the future of the Church at a whole lot of different levels. In the face of a deeply agnostic and secular culture, how can the Church survive? Is there a future for the Church? What about this virus we are facing? The Church is facing an unprecedented financial challenge with income way down – how will it survive?

Let's go back to appearances being deceptive. The Kingdom of God cannot fail – that much is certain. What God begun in Christ through His Cross and Resurrection is invincibly growing and will one day come to fruit at the inevitable return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The institutional and denominational churches will face their challenges but not the Kingdom – it is sure and certain – it quite simply cannot and will not fail. It is invisible to the eye, except that it is seen in the love of its people, but it is a thing of God's creation and unlike the powerful creations of human beings, it cannot fail and they will inevitably fail.

The seed has grown and grown from a few hundred people in Paul's time to a countless host. That kingdom is a Temple – it lies in the hearts of its people – they are the Temple of the living God in this world.

I know that many of us may either have been discouraged or are feeling discouraged to some degree. Be of good heart my friends. The Kingdom came in Jesus, grew through time, is vibrant today in the hearts of countless millions and will never fail. It cannot fail because of who the King is – King Jesus and He is in full control and will soon return to set aside all evil and reign forever and ever.

Iain

Intimations

It is clear that although we have been given permission for a limited return to our churches, things are not as certain as they first appeared. I have taken the decision [although I had planned a sooner return] to wait until the last Sunday in August, wee how things are, and if they appear as risk free as possible, have our first service in Church on the 30th of August. Even at that, we will still only be allowed a maximum of 50 people [I don't think we will be able to accommodate more than 40] and this will have to be done by "appointment".

If things appear much better, then we will return earlier, but I do not want to place anyone at needless risk!

The process? A deep clean of the whole building which may include "fogging" as a further precaution. Compliance with all of the Church of Scotland Regulations on opening.

We will not stop other forms of communication – the Newsletter will continue, the service will be livestreamed to Facebook and Zoom will continue for those who wish a more personal interaction – everything will be done to embrace as many people as possible.

If it is at all possible and you are out and about, can I suggest you pop down to see the Church Garden – it is looking fabulous and has been a real positive for people in the community.

The Trolley – which is now a Table. As well as donation money to buy food, people have been leaving food. Alistair and I have been in contact with quite a number of people in real need for whom this has been a real lifesaver. Things sadly for many financially will get worse and not better. What the Church has been doing over these last months has been a really positive witness in Touch.

The finances of the Church have been challenging, not just to St. Margaret's but to the Church of Scotland as a whole. A huge thank you to everyone who has made the effort to try and pay their donation on a regular basis through the bank – it is very much appreciated – thank you too for all those who have sent in cheques who would normally donate through FWO – this has substantially eased the pressure on our finances.

For those who are keeping back envelopes, we cannot receive them until the church reopens – for legal reasons, we are not permitted to be in the church simply to count money, and for further legal reasons the counting has to be logged and witnessed by more than one person.

Have you noticed that there is more time available to us? Can I encourage you to be adventurous with that time? I have tried to read a book of the Bible each day – a challenge I have found stimulating and spiritually challenging and rewarding.

How about reading a good spiritual book – if you want a good Christian biography or book, let me know and I will drop something either in the post or through the letterbox – I have more than a couple of thousand in my study!

How about going on to YouTube and typing in "Christian Talks" – there are an amazing number of worthwhile and stimulating speakers to listen to. All of this is far better than some of the moronic stuff that is on the "box."

Let me close on with a joke which I hope Ross Kerr will find amusing:

Two crisps were walking along the road and a car stopped to offer them a lift. The crisps replied, "No thanks we are Walkers!"