

Interim Moderator:  
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From your Interim Moderator

May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Friends

I am writing this in the 9<sup>th</sup> week of 'lockdown'; I hope you have been coping with the enforced restrictions on movement and the lack of any social gatherings. The relatively kind weather, the blossoming trees and flowers and birdsong may have helped, but not even they can compensate for the lack of human physical contact, and seeing and hugging family and friends. As I write, there are the first hints that some of these restrictions may be lifted soon, but we know that nothing is going to happen quickly, and we will emerge at the end into a very different world.

But it is still God's world, and we are still God's people. During these last two months, churches have been finding new ways of reaching out to their members and their wider communities, meeting both spiritual and physical needs. Services have been streamed online and community larders and support groups have been operating to ensure that the most vulnerable people in the community are able to get the food and medicines they need. I want to thank Rev Marina Brown, Michael Benneworth and our worship leaders within the congregation who have been providing each week on our website some reflections for us to ponder, and prayers for us to say. I hope also that you have been able to tune into the Reflections from the Quay on BBC1, and/or many of the excellent streamed services from around Scotland. I personally have been kept busy helping out at Perth and Kinross Foodbank, which has seen an increase in the number of people using it. It is good to report however that food donations keep coming in, not least from Clathymore in our parish, where one family has been organising a fortnightly collection of food from their neighbours. It is so heartening to see the amount of caring and compassion which this lockdown has generated. It will be important to continue to care for our neighbours in the weeks and months ahead, as life is going to continue to be difficult for so many people who face the loss of livelihoods, as well as for those who have been bereaved and are mourning the loss of loved ones.

As I write, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland should have been meeting in Edinburgh. Last year's General Assembly agreed to radical changes within the church, and the report of progress made was eagerly anticipated this year. However, for the first time since 1689, the General Assembly was cancelled. Nevertheless, we were able to watch online as the new Moderator was installed – Rev Dr Martin Fair from Arbroath St Andrew's Church. In his address to the church

and nation, Martin spoke of the uncertainties about the future, but reminded us that God is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow; “though every circumstance change, God’s love remains. And from love flows peace.”

Who knows when we will be able again to meet for worship in our church buildings? I hope that day may be sooner rather than later, but for now, we can continue to be the church (which is after all the people rather than the buildings), reaching out to those who most need to know that God loves them. Let me close by sharing part of the ecumenical prayer which has been prepared for churches throughout Scotland for this coming weekend:

Living God, as you spoke to the bereft and the orphaned in days past,  
Speak to the bereft and the orphaned in days present.  
Speak to the uncertain and the anxious.  
Speak into the depths of our incomprehension and fear.

Living God, your promise  
Is that we will not be left alone to face the world.  
We thank you that through the gift of your Spirit  
That promise is fulfilled.

Living God, be with all who sustain our common life at this time,  
Carers and nurses, cleaners and porters,  
Doctors and ambulance staff, delivery drivers and posties.  
Through their giving our common life is sustained.

Living God, as you have watched over us in the past,  
Watch over us in the present.  
As once more we thank you, that through Christ  
And by your Holy Spirit, we are not alone. Amen.

With every blessing

Marjorie Clark