

Aberdalgie & Forteviot

(Church of Scotland) OSCR Charity No. SC044503

July 2020



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Dear Friends,

All the Elders have unanimously agreed to wait until Phase 4 of the Scottish Government's Route Map before we reopen our places of worship. It is not possible at this stage to say exactly when Phase 4 will be, but be assured that when we reach Phase 4 neither Aberdalgie church nor Forteviot church will be opened until a full Covid 19 Risk Assessment has been carried out.

Please do not be disheartened by this news, for it means that the Kirk places a very high priority on the safety and wellbeing of all our members and any who choose to attend worship in either of our places of worship. I know it means waiting until we can all gather again, and that even when we do gather, we may have to be at least one meter apart, have to wear face masks and may not be allowed tea and coffee after Services. Though it will not be soon, we will get back to our places of worship eventually, where you and generations before you have offered their praise and prayers to God and where fellowship has been enjoyed.

As your Minister I miss sharing Sunday morning worship and fellowship with you, but I am confident that when we return we will be all the more zealous for having missed our gatherings and we will enjoy our worship and fellowship all the more.

Your patience is appreciated and will not be in vain. Our Session Clerk and others have been doing a lot of preparatory work to ensure our churches are ready to reopen (safely) as soon as is possible. You will be kept informed of any significant developments. Meanwhile, be assured that the Kirk Session has your interest at heart and that you can make contact with your Elder or the Minister should you need to, and though at the moment we can offer little by way of personal presence, we can speak over the phone and we can most certainly pray for you. But what is much more important than knowing your Elder and Minister are here for you, is knowing that God is there for you, there beside you, around you and within you and even though you may feel He is far away, He will never abandon you. No Christian is ever alone, never ever alone!

God bless,

James

Prayer : Lord in your mercy, we pray you would limit the deadly effect of the COVID 19 pandemic in our nation. We pray your shaking would achieve its purpose and you would bring the nations of the world to repentance before you. Would you winnow your church and raise up a holy remnant who can declare your purpose and can point the way to salvation in Jesus Christ. Lord refine us and sanctify us that we may be clear witnesses for you in these days. May your name be honoured and revered again in our nation of Scotland, for Jesus sake. Amen.

Aberdalgie & Forteviot

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The Big Picture : A time of change for the Kirk

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the Kirk is facing a time of unprecedented change with tremendous opportunities to advance the Gospel in new ways. In May the General Assembly was cancelled and replaced with a virtual/on-line meeting of the Assembly Trustees with the new Moderator, Dr Martin Fair, installed at a socially distanced ceremony in the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh.

Instead of assessing the first year's progress towards achieving the goals set out in the 2019 Radical Action Plan the Kirk finds itself in uncharted territory facing many new problems. So let's take a look at these new challenges and what the Kirk is planning to do.

One immediate challenge is financial: congregations are expected to lose around a third of their income in 2020 and it is estimated that M&M contributions from parishes to the central church may fall by as much as £20million this year. The Kirk is also facing reduced income from investments and other activities, such as hall lettings and fundraisers. In consequence the Radical Action Plan agreed by the 2019 General Assembly is now being set aside and a revised strategic plan is being formulated. Not all the reforms proposed in the Radical Action Plan are being shelved, however; the "Right Spaces in the Right Places" review of buildings will be accelerated and the effort to reduce the number of Presbyteries will also be prioritized. This will mean change for us locally in Perth Presbytery and, at its June meeting, Perth Presbytery confirmed its intention to proceed with the proposed merger with Dundee, Angus, Dunkeld & Meigle and possibly Stirling Presbyteries with a target completion date of May 2021. There is also a determination to push ahead with a radical revision of the Presbytery Plan meaning more potential closures or amalgamations of parishes.

There is no clear guidance yet on when Congregations may return to normal worship in their own buildings. Many Congregations are starting to explore the potential of using new technologies for both worship services and also Kirk Session/Presbytery meetings. In fact the response in some Congregations to on-line services has been very encouraging, for example, our sister parish Dunbarney/Forquhannoch is regularly seeing attendance figures averaging 75+ for its Sunday morning worship service on Facebook. And there is no doubt about the need right across the church to expand our online presence.

So where are we? What is the overall BIG Picture? Expect lots of change in the short term but overall we are where we always have beenSafe in God's hands, secure in the knowledge that we are his children and that He loves us.

Donations: Many of you will already be aware that there is now a 'Donate' button on our parish web site—should you wish to contribute to parish funds. There is a similar opportunity to donate to the Church of Scotland on their web site. All financial assistance will be most gratefully received.