

The Country Link



Kelso
Country
Churches

~~~~~**March/April, 2021**



Dear Friends

He went a little farther on, threw himself face downward on the ground, and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me! Yet not what I want, but what you want.”

**Matthew 26.39**

As Jesus came near the end of his life, one thing that became increasingly important to him was prayer. He wanted and needed to keep in close touch with his loving heavenly Father. On his last night of freedom he spent it on his knees in prayer and so fervent was his praying that he shed blood. The disciples with him couldn't keep praying; they fell asleep

Life may seem hopeless to us now, in the middle of yet another lockdown, as it may even have done for Jesus as he prayed waiting for his arrest. But we know that however hopeless things seem, our loving heavenly Father hears us and responds to our prayers. We need to keep on praying and keep on trusting in Him. Don't give up hope!

Our Sunday morning online services give you space for praying and reflecting. I'd encourage you also to use our daily bible reading notes and make time to silently wait on our Lord and pour out your hearts in prayer. Studying scripture and prayer are the cornerstones of our spiritual life. Through study and prayer we grow as Christians and can know the work of the Spirit in us.

As the great reformer Martin Luther said: ‘Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon their knees.’

We may feel powerless, insignificant and very imperfect. But in coming before God in prayer, we receive everything we need to live as his faithful followers.

Yours,  
Stephen

# *Parish News and Updates*

It was back in November last year that the Country Link was last issued and since then, our church life and our own daily and family lives have been dominated by the Covid 19 restrictions. This has been no great hardship for retired people like myself living in these lovely rural parts but life has been full of anxiety, isolation, illness and loss of loved ones for so many.

Thanks to the wonders of technology, radio and television, which have done a fantastic job of keeping us informed and guided us through the vaccination process, perhaps we will be allowed to worship in our churches again fairly soon, and meet up with family and friends.

## **FUNDRAISING**

Although Christmas services were cancelled, there was a retiring collection for Blythwood Care charity which raised £139.

Jim Smith has caused much interest with his books about our parishes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and has sold them to a total of £1,320.

He is now working on compiling more booklets of life in our parishes in more recent times which will be available at a later date.

The sale of Margaret Carlaw's book 'Aspects Of Culture' about the Parish of Stichill has raised £145 to date for church funds.

## **PROPERTY TEAM**

Our churches and hall have been checked regularly- an important task especially when our churches are not open for worship during the worst of winter weather. We thank you Geordie, Dougal, Bert and Jim for your vigilance.

## **THE GUILD**

Despite planning a programme of meetings and events, none of it has happened this session, but the work and witness of the Guild still needs our support. To that end, we in KCC Guild (and Guild branches around the country) had a virtual Valentine's Soup Lunch on 14<sup>th</sup> February when we enjoyed a bowl of soup in our own homes and have sent donations for the work of the Guild Projects at both home and abroad. This will compensate for the money we would have raised at the Guild Coffee Morning planned for March and no longer possible.

**See page 4!**

## *Ramblings from the Session Clerk*

Isolation now seems a part of our lives and we have adapted to it, albeit with a few grumbles, but it will be nice to get back to a new normal and be able to do the things we took for granted in the past; such as to shake hands with someone we meet, and, dare I say, ‘cuddle them’.

To have our churches open for in-person worship, shops, swimming pools and all the other facilities available to us which we took for granted – how much more will we appreciate the things that God has given us when life gets back to normal.

It is going to take a long time to get back to ‘normal’ and we need to be patient. The church was opened for a period up to Christmas with severe restrictions put on us, but we managed, and although we were abiding by Church of Scotland rules and there was no singing, the familiar hymns were played and we had a sense of being nearer to God.

When restrictions are lifted, we will again open the doors of our two churches with Makerstoun holding services on first and third Sundays of the month, and Stichill on the second and fourth Sundays at the usual time of 10.30am. We await the government’s timing on this.

The structure of the church is changing as we speak. Presbyteries are getting amalgamated; the Presbytery of Jedburgh is uniting with the Presbyteries of Duns, Peebles and Melrose, and most likely Midlothian (or part of it) and this will happen in the next year or two, so that will be fun!

Jedburgh Presbytery is also getting a reduction in ministers for the area. In the next four years it is likely that the number of ministers will go down from 10.5 to 5-7.

Of the two churches which have closed, Roxburgh has technically been sold but with covid, nothing is certain. Now we are looking to sell Smailholm church but again, lockdown has hampered progress.

I look forward to a future where we will appreciate what we have in our parishes; love for our Heavenly Father and love and kindness for each other. God will always be with us, an integral part of our lives, but the structure of how we are the church will change.

Our faith must remain strong and God’s house will always be there for us, just in a different way and place.

We look forward with hope to spring and all the joys that it fetches, and with the covid vaccine being rolled out, the world now seems a brighter place. We are getting there.

Jim Smith



## *A Time for Everything*

Lockdown, a time to stop and think,  
life is precious, gone in a blink.  
A time to pause, listen and look,  
attack the garden, craft, read a book.  
A time to message, phone, send a card  
for those on their own this is extra hard.  
A time to step off the treadmill of past;  
We always knew some things wouldn't last.  
A time to listen to the birds' daily song  
Or folk we know, before they are gone.  
A time to admire the beauty all around,  
diving swallows, flowers emerging from the ground



A time to appreciate your footsteps on the dusty path  
Or just indulge in a peaceful bath.  
A time to give thanks for those who all care  
we wouldn't survive if they weren't there.  
A time to pray for those who have lost someone so dear,  
and those who are sick with no family near.  
A time to wait for happier days to come  
when all is under control or the battle won.  
A time to still work but now on our own  
or do as we're asked and stay at home.  
A time to long for when we can be together,  
a hug, a cuddle, cuppa or just a blether.  
A time to realise what we really appreciate  
and change what we must before it's too late.

A time to know what matters most, not material things or wealth,  
but family, friends, the little things, and especially health.  
Yes, a time to reflect on all the above  
but most of all, a time for love.

## Prayer is the foundation of our relationship with God

Prayer is giving our attention to God. There is no 'hidden secret' when it comes to prayer. God is always alongside us and ready to listen. Anyone can pray, at any time and in any place. Why not begin now?



I find that prayer is first and foremost about presence - purposefully and mindfully putting ourselves in God's presence, with all that concerns us, as well as all that we are grateful for; to find a special place, or a special time when we can look outside ourselves and sense 'the other', the creator, the Spirit of life, the one we call God.

Having a special place to pray might help. Or light a candle as you start. Maybe listen to some quiet, meditative music. And then sit quietly in God's presence. Speak as you are able and listen out for God speaking to you.

## What the Bible says about Prayer

Quite a lot as it happens! - It doesn't tell us to be on our best behaviour, or mind our P's and Q's. Rather we are invited to speak with God, 'as with a friend' (Exodus 33 v11) just as Moses did. Prayer is about honesty, authenticity and just telling God how it is - good, bad, dull, scary, joyful; absolutely everything.

The bible asks us to enter that deep relationship with God whereby we can treat him as friend and life long companion.



### **What Jesus says about prayer**

Jesus took prayer seriously. He is frequently depicted as leaving the crowds or disciples and taking himself off to a quiet place, or even the wilderness that surrounds the cities to find space to pray. (Mark 1v35, Matt 14v23)

We may need to find a time of day to suit us; maybe early in the morning, on the way to work, maybe at the end of the day to reflect on what was good, where we noticed God, where we ignored God. Jesus shows us that time and space are important; but above all prayer is a deep relationship, where we are open and honest with God, and where we find peace.





## *Dates for your Diary*

Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> March

Palm Sunday

Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Good Friday

Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> April

Easter Sunday

For a second year, it is unlikely that we will be able to celebrate Easter in church with special services on Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday as the Scottish Government has announced that churches won't open until after Easter but that may change before Easter. Do look up the KCC website and Facebook where the Minister will post details of on-line services and other relevant materials nearer the time.

### Kelso Quest Youth Work Project



We are delighted to discover that our joint Youth Work Project between Kelso North and Ednam, Kelso Old and Sprouston and Kelso Country Churches has received an extra years' funding.

Sadly we have had to let our Youth Worker Connor Barclay go but we will be advertising for a new Youth Worker and Project leader in the coming months. We are grateful to Connor for journeying with us for a year and wish him well in his future ministry.

We remain dedicated to reaching out to our young folk of Kelso and the surrounding villages, to offer safe places, a listening ear and challenges and adventure in the future.

Watch this space!

Anna Rodwell



As we are hopefully nearing the end of lockdown I would like to get some feedback on the various worship and prayer aids that I have been producing to see if there is enough demand for me to continue to put them together. Please let me or your elder know which you find helpful.



The podcasts are listened to by maybe 10 households each week. The short weekly reflection- PS - by 5 to 10 people. And I don't know how many people are using the weekly worship or the bible study notes. Please email me to let me know your thoughts (you can use the contact page of the church website if you don't have my email address).

Thanks

Stephen



### **Phone calls**

I have phoned many of our members on a regular basis but not everyone, only those whose numbers I had or when an elder gave it to me. I will try to keep phoning, particularly to those who can't get to church. However it is likely to become a lot less frequent when things begin to return to the new normal.

### **Useful contact details**

**Minister: Rev. Stephen Manners 470 663**

**Email: [smanners@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:smanners@churchofscotland.org.uk)**

**Website: [www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk](http://www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk)**

**Church of Scotland charity no. SC000958**

## Lockdown Lingo - the new terminology

**‘Coronacoaster’** – The ups and downs of your mood during the pandemic. You’re loving lockdown one minute but suddenly weepy with anxiety the next. It truly is “an emotional coronacoaster.”

**Quarantinis** – experimental cocktails mixed from whatever random ingredients you have to hand. The boozy equivalent of a store cupboard supper. Southern Comfort and Ribena quarantini with a glace cherry anyone? These are sipped at ‘locktail hour’.

**Coronials** – as opposed to millennials, referring to the future generation of babies conceived or born during coronavirus quarantine. They might be known as “Generation C” or, “Children of the Quarn.”

**Coronadose** – An overdose of bad news from consuming too much media during a time of crisis. Can result in a panicdemic.

**Covidiot** – One who ignores public health advice or behaves with reckless disregard for the safety of others can be said to display ‘covidioy’; also called a “lockclown.”

**Antisocial distancing** - Using health precautions as an excuse for generally ignoring people you find irritating.

**Covid 10** – The 10lbs in weight that we are gaining from comfort-eating and comfort-drinking. Also known as “fattening the curve.”

The bees kept buzzing,  
The world kept turning,  
The ewes kept lambing,  
The swallows returned,  
And it was spring.



## Memories of Lockdown 2020 *from Kath Manners*

As a family, we are quite into litter picking, especially in our local area in Edinburgh. The first lockdown saw both myself and daughter Lucy not doing our usual work so we decided to structure our week with at least one day dedicated to litter picking. Quite often we managed more and daughter Joanna, who was working from home, would regularly come too on her days off.

We discovered that it is a great way to meet your neighbours and were often stopping to chat with both people we already knew and people that we didn't. I also saw it as an act of worship caring for creation, literally redeeming the environment and serving the community.

We always had a huge pile of bags of rubbish for the bin men when they came. They graciously took away all this extra stuff and cheered us on in our endeavours. The picture shows Lucy and I with a day's haul.

Littering is a blight on our beautiful country. I am shocked by the amount of litter on the grass verges in the Borders, and of course, in the cities it is an overwhelming tide.



It is very inexpensive to go on the internet and buy a good litter picker and a ring to attach a black bag to. I would encourage everyone to join in.

I'm sure some of you already do!

*Prayer for Lent from 'Seasons and Celebrations.'*

Father, we are glad that you offer times to stop and think.  
As Lent returns, we pause on our journey and thank you:  
for your costly commitment to us in Jesus Christ;  
for the gospel stories that declare your love;  
for opportunities of talking together about our faith  
and for times of personal prayer and reflection.

We thank you when the church has been prepared to take risks,  
suffer for the work of your kingdom,  
and that we are part of its journeying life.  
As we discover more about your love,  
Help us to show our thankfulness by putting  
that same love into action in our lives.



Lord Jesus

We pray for those who cannot walk the Lenten road.  
How can they fast to show the discipline of faith  
when fasting is their daily life, starvation ever closer,  
and thirst barely quenched; the well dry?  
How can they make a busy diary clear  
To offer time for service, prayer and thought,  
When every desert day is tedium-long,  
stretched out by unemployment and the loss of work,  
and one day stands as did the last,  
and will the next.

Lord, whilst we thank you for Lent,  
and every call to discipleship it brings,  
we pray for those who know its call too well,  
And live it every day.

Donald Hilton