

## *Pray with the Guild*

**Monday:** give thanks for the work of CrossReach, the Social Services of the Church of Scotland for all the work they do with vulnerable people in the community.

**Tuesday:** on International Workers Memorial Day, for all who have lost their life providing frontline care against covid 19. Give thanks to them and remember particularly those known to us

**Wednesday:** to all who have been victims of chemical warfare. Praying for those who have survived often with life-changing illness. Asking that God will intervene in hearts of world leaders and bring an end to the use of barbaric weapons.

**Thursday:** asking God to encourage those to whom the future is uncertain through furlough, short-term working and redundancy. Give them hope for the days ahead.

**Friday:** those who have celebrated the joy of a new baby, giving thanks for each new life and pray that God will protect this fragile life in the months ahead.

**Saturday:** for Guild and church members who live in nursing homes. Pray particularly for those known to you.

**Sunday:** for those in the poorest parts of the world for whom the lockdown will be as life-threatening as the covid 19 virus itself.

**1 Corinthians 13: v7** – There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance.

# The Country Link



~~~~~May/June, 2020

**Dear friends,**

We bring this letter/magazine to you at this time to let you know what we are doing as a church to try and support you. We want to let you know where you can find the spiritual support that you need and where to ask for practical help during this crisis.

No-one is immune to catching this virus or the terrible effects it has. But we can all know God's loving arms holding us and His peace filling our hearts.

Hold onto what the Bible says to us for times like this - 'Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.'**1 Peter 5.7**

**Stephen.**

This is the time to be slow,  
Lie low to the wall  
Until the bitter weather passes.

Try, as best you can, not to let  
The wire brush of doubt  
Scrape from your heart  
All sense of yourself  
And your hesitant light.



If you remain generous,  
Time will come good;  
And you will find your feet  
Again on fresh pastures of promise,  
Where the air will be kind  
And blushed with beginning.

John O'Donohue

## *From the Manse*

All churches are closed and there are no Sunday morning services or meetings of any kind taking place in church at this time.

So how do we come into God's presence? How can we continue in worship in fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ?

Kelso North and Ednam Church are filming a service each Sunday morning and you can watch this live or recorded on their website/facebook page

<http://www.kelsonorthandednam.org.uk/index.asp>

On our own church website in the section of worship, you will find the lectionary readings and I now also record a service of reflection, prayers and hymns as a podcast.

<http://www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk/about/services>

You will find more information in the News section and on our Facebook page. Click where it says 'Find us on Facebook' at the very bottom of the front page of the website or the other links where it is highlighted.

If you would like some pastoral support please phone your elder or the minister on 01573 470663.

I know this won't come naturally to many of you but if you have access to the internet, then you can check things out on our website and Facebook page. You will find lots to help you worship on your own and find links to services and podcasts coming from local churches.

### ***Website/Facebook page***

It's nearly a year since our new website got up and running and 6 months since our church Facebook page was set up. I would really like feedback as to how we are doing with these. A lot of work went into setting them up and it takes time to keep them up to date. From the statistics I see on the site, only about 10 people regularly see what is on the Facebook page. This is a pity because there is a lot shared on there about what is going on in the various communities that make up our parish, that doesn't always make it to the News section of the website. It might be that we need to put access to this page directly on our website.

Increasing numbers are accessing the website which is encouraging but it may be that you have ideas for making it better or things that you would like to see us put in it. Please let your elder know or communicate directly with me.

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

Church of Scotland charity no. SC000958



## **10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May**

This is where we usually announce the Bread & Cheese Lunch for Christian Aid but sadly, this year is different. We may have a fund-raiser later in the year but the reasons for poverty and

suffering in the world are still very real today.

It's important that we try to give what we can to help and Christian Aid week gives us as Christians added encouragement to help our neighbours near and far. Stephen is recording a reflective service by podcast on Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> May so please listen to that if you can.

There are easy ways you can give online at [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk) or you can send a cheque to our Treasurer, Liz Orr, Downstream, Mayfield, Kelso, TD5 7BL made payable to Kelso Country Churches (Church of Scotland) with a note to say that it's for Christian Aid.

## **Summer Fayre**

Also in the May/June edition of Country Link, we advertise the Summer Faye held on first Saturday in June – always a popular event and a real boost to KCC funds. Sadly, that can't happen this year either which means that there will be no delicious afternoon teas or plant stall to get your summer bedding plants. Bert and I are sorry as it's been a fixed event in our routine for nearly 40 year. However, some Garden Centres are delivering orders and perhaps all will be allowed to open very soon.

## *Looking at the positives with Liz Orr*

In the challenging times that we're living through, it's important to engage in activities which lift our mood and give us joy. Increasingly we are being advised that limiting our consumption of news can be important for our wellbeing. This is just a short list of some things which I have enjoyed in recent times – I'm sure you will be able to make your own list to draw upon.

1. *Listen* – 'The Wind in the Willows', by Kenneth Grahame: a ten part series on the BBC Sounds website, read brilliantly by Bernard Cribbins. A beautifully written story set in the British countryside and suitable for all ages.

2. *Read* – A Redbird Christmas' by Fannie Flagg. Set mostly in Alabama, only a small part of it takes place at Christmas! Oswald T Campbell has moved south to escape Chicago and various problems, and finds hope, new life and community.

3. *Watch* – A good film can be an excellent way to 'switch off' for a time. One that I enjoyed recently was 'John and Julie', a 1955 film concerning two children from Dorset who are eager to see the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and decide to take themselves off to London to do so.

4. *Read/Watch* – 'The Shack', by Wm Paul Young is a novel which has also been made into an excellent film, and has been described by Bear Grylls as 'One of the most faith-enhancing books I have ever read'. The book draws from the author's own experience of overwhelming suffering and healing, and is infused with the unconditional and overwhelming love of God.

5. *Fresh Air!* – I don't need to say much more about this in a country parish, but just getting outside into the fresh air for a short or long time can do wonders.

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*Some Light Relief!* – A man was walking down the street in Kelso when he met God. He said, "Well, I never thought I would meet you here." God answered, "I am just like everyone else these days, I'm working from home!"

## *A Letter from our Minister*

We come to that time of year which we have been looking forward to all winter. To lazy sunny days in the garden, having a barbecue with family and friends. Summer time is here again, and I'm sure we all hope it will be warm and sunny.

But instead of looking forward with hope, some are full of fear and uncertainty with the advent of Covid-19. No holidays to look forward to now, no time together with family and friends as we are all reducing social contact and many of us are completely self-isolating.

What will happen to me if I catch it? Will my aged relatives and friends be okay. What is going to happen to my job? Will we ever get back to how things used to be?

So many people have been affected by this serious illness and it's still going on. There seems to be no end in sight as the authorities are talking of it being around for at least 18 months or until a vaccine has been found. So what do I do as a person of faith, as a person whose full-time work is to help people come to know God and become one of Jesus' disciples?

Besides following medical guidelines, I put my trust in an ultimately loving, faithful God. And hold onto what the Bible says to us in times like this, "Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." **1 Peter 5.7**

No one is immune to catching this virus or the terrible effects it has, but we can all know God's loving arms holding us and His peace filling our hearts

### **Visiting**

Since I came here as your minister I have tried to get around the various parts of the parish and visit people. Once the lockdown is over I will hopefully get back to doing this once more.

I usually just come round and knock at someone's door and see if they are in. If you prefer I phoned or emailed to arrange the visit please send me your contact details and I will do so.

I look forward to meeting all of you who belong to our church if I haven't managed to do so already.

## Finance report at May 2020

“In the midst of the current global and economic crisis our church buildings may be closed but the work of the church goes on. The regular and generous giving of our members helps to support and sustain that work and together we can ensure that the church continues to demonstrate God’s generosity, faithfulness and love as people across our nation face life-changing situations.”

*(From the Church of Scotland website)*

At this time, we at Kelso Country Churches can continue to play our part through prayer, practical help and regular giving. Because of our own individual circumstances, not all of us are able to offer practical or financial help at this time, but we can pray for everyone who is impacted by the coronavirus across the world in these unprecedented times.

For those who are able to continue their financial support of our church there are a number of different ways to do so, even while no services are being held:

1. Standing orders – If you would like to start donating regularly to the church by standing order, or amend an existing standing order, contact me and I will provide you with the appropriate form.
2. Internet banking - If you have internet banking then you can give your offering via the congregation's bank account. Again, contact me for further details.
3. Online donations - The Church of Scotland is currently working on the possibility of a safe and secure online donation facility which would enable donors to give to their local congregation through the national website. If this becomes available I will let you know through a future edition of the Country Link magazine.
4. Freewill offering envelopes – If you are unable to make your offerings as above then you can use the envelopes, if you have them, to set aside your regular offering. (And if you wish to get them to me at any point, prior to services resuming, contact me for details of how to do this – a cheque is preferred in this case.)



whom we miss sharing a cuppa and craic with on a Sunday. We do enjoy listening in to our own and other local church services on a Sunday which are all different but equally uplifting and improving every week.

Oh, and of course, there’s the vexing problem of needing a haircut. I found the dog clippers in the attic and proceeded to give Bert a haircut - with his rather wary permission, it has to be said, but I thought the outcome was quite professional. I must say he sat still which is more than our dear departed Flora did, but he was more critical of the end result. I declined his offer to do likewise to my mop – quite fancy pigtails!

Here is something to ponder, ‘How does our First Minister always manage to be so well groomed in these straitened times?’

Anyway, what to do now? I could clean a kitchen cupboard or two .... is that the kettle I hear boiling?



## Laughter Lines

One Sunday a minister told his congregation that the church needed some extra money and asked the people to prayerfully consider giving a little extra in the offering plate. He said that whoever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns.

After the offering plates were passed. The minister glanced down and noticed that someone had placed a £100 note in the offering. He was so impressed that he immediately shared his joy with the congregation and said he would particularly like to thank the person who had put so much money in the plate.

All the way at the back of the church, Rosie, who was a shy young woman, gently raised her hand. The minister asked her to come to the front, so she made her way forward. He told her how kind it was that she had given so much and in appreciation asked that she pick out three hymns. Her eyes brightened as she looked over the congregation, pointed to 3 good-looking men and said, ‘I’ll take him and him and him!’



## *A Day in Lockdown in the Duncan Household*

Here we are at the beginning of May and over 4 weeks into lockdown as a result of the extraordinary circumstances we find ourselves in, and I have topped up the birds' nuts in the garden, hung out a washing, mopped the kitchen floor, flicked a duster around an already tidy house, checked and answered my emails, removed a flea from the cat's ear (he's been keeping bad company again!) and it's only 10am.

Now it's coffee time and another excuse to reach for the biscuit tin! Funny how mealtimes become highlights of our day when our diaries are empty with CANCELLED written beside hair appointments, church events, social gatherings etc. But we have the phone, the internet, Facebook (I must get acquainted with that), Skype to see and speak directly to our families anywhere in the world, and now Zoom and Podcasting... words I didn't know 2 months ago but which I have enjoyed learning about and mastering (almost), and the knowledge that everyone we know is experiencing the same restrictions.

Bert is happily self-isolating in his g/houses, allotment and garden which are going to be very productive this year. Perhaps this is the year many of us could open our gardens to the public for a good cause but nobody is allowed to come!

We are so blessed to live in this beautiful countryside where it is fairly easy to self-isolate on our daily walks while enjoying such delights as two swans landing on the pond behind the house, two deer disappearing into the woods, the swallows returning (Bert reminds me to keep the garage door shut) and the crops growing and view from the window changing daily.

But we know it's not like that for everyone. For millions of people elsewhere in the country and around the world this coronavirus is devastating lives and livelihoods, some known to us, and especially I think of the refugees and shanty town dwellers with limited food, no proper sanitation, over-stretched health facilities and lack of hope, knowing their circumstances are unlikely to change after this crisis is over. We listen to TV and radio news bulletins with mounting dread but seem powerless to switch it off.

I look forward to my weekly Pilates class on Zoom, my foray to Kelso for the weekly shop, and keeping in touch with our church family

5. Cheques – If you would prefer to make a one-off donation by cheque then this can be sent to me, and made payable to “Kelso Country Churches (Church of Scotland)”.

*Many thanks* again to all of you for your support of the congregation, however you do this – through prayer, practical or financial help. Whatever you do, it enables the work of God's kingdom of love, both here in the parish and beyond, as we continue to trust God for His ongoing provision for us, particularly in these uncertain times.

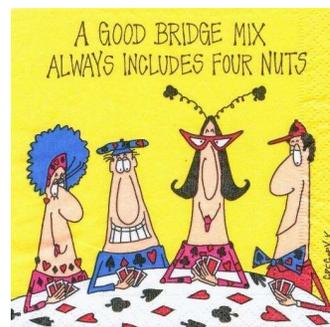
*A note to Gift Aid donors:*

We are extremely grateful to all of you who are taxpayers and have signed a Gift Aid declaration in our favour – this enables us to claim an additional 25 pence from HMRC for every £1 you donate (in 2019 this amounted to an incredible £2,336 in total). We recommend that you check that you are still paying as much or more tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all your donations (in the corresponding tax year), and if not, just let me know.

**Liz Orr, Treasurer**

A couple of other things to report are that we donated to Blythwood Care the sum of £65 which was raised from the Easter chicks Kathy Wilkie made and sold before the 'lockdown.' Thank you Kathy.

Our retiring offering for **World Vision** for their East African crisis appeal raised £89. This donation helped to provide food and medical care for the people affected by the severe drought in that region.



Thanks to all at **Bridge Club** for their donation of £354.95. This is much appreciated especially as our income will be down quite a bit in the weeks ahead.

**A huge thank you from us all in KCC to Liz** for her sterling work in preparing the annual accounts and looking after our finances with such grace and good humour.

Her busiest time of year was also when her mum Jeanette was seriously ill in hospital. I'm glad to say that she is now home and recuperating.

**Call to join in prayer with all churches all over the country  
on Sunday nights at 7pm.**



We pray:  
Living God, speak into the  
depths of our experience  
Speak the words that still  
our fears  
And calm our anxieties:

**‘Peace be with you’**

Speak your words to the lonely and the broken,  
To the bereaved and to those whose world has crumbled:

**‘Peace be with you’**

Faithful God, speak to us behind locked doors  
As we remember others who risk their own safety,  
In order to serve others.

**‘peace be with them’**

Carers, nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers  
Delivery drivers and shop assistants:

**‘peace be with them’**

God inspires hope, speak to us in the present  
And speak to us in the future,  
For those who lead the life of our nation: our Queen  
Elizabeth,

First Minister and Prime Minister, and all who shape our  
common life.

For us all: Peace shall be renewed.

God, whose name is love and whose gift is love,  
Open our hearts to know you and to love you,  
To love you and to love our neighbour  
And as we do, to hear again:

**‘peace be with you’.**

May we find our strength in you. **Amen**

## *Worship*

Worship has certainly been done differently during lockdown. In our church I have prepared a service with youtube hymns and prayers on the worship service page of our website. I have also learned to podcast (as did Sophia).

In preparing things differently, it makes me question how we do worship presently in church and helps me to think about how we might do it in the future. Hopefully, though, nothing like the lockdown will happen again.

This is a discussion we should begin to have in our fellowship. I know many of us like the familiar. We like how things have always been done but it just might be that you could also come to like new ways of doing things!

Let me know of ideas that you have or ways of worshipping that you might have recently come across that you would like to see us trying. And also let me know what it is about our present worship that you appreciate and that you would not like to see changed.

*Stephen*

## *Prayer for a Pandemic*

May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake...

May we who have no risk factors remember those who are most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working at home, remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making the rent.

May we who have the flexibility of caring for our children when schools close, remember those who have no options.

May we who have had to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who settle in for quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us find ways to be the loving embrace to our neighbours. **Amen**

This prayer came from a minister in North Carolina, USA.