

Dear everyone,

The sun is continuing to shine in North Knapdale so I hope you have been able to spend some time outside enjoying the Spring. The cuckoo has been heard, and Ospreys sighted above Loch Sween. We may be tempted to think that our lives are “on hold” at the moment, that this is a pause and then we will get started again as we used to be. But it is not a pause is it? We continue to develop our lives, have new experiences and learn new things about the world and ourselves. Maybe it is about ourselves that we learn most, our weaknesses seem to be a bit more evident – impatience, procrastination, intolerance – I seem to be getting very intolerant of the adverts on TV - especially for inessentials, they seem so futile and unnecessary now. But we also can become more aware of our strengths, things we are good at – listening to others, making things, writing or telephoning. Enjoying the conversations we can have, being patient with what we cannot do, and appreciation of all who are working to help us in our lives each day. So we can use this time to become more aware of ourselves, to celebrate our abilities and our gifts, and to work through our weaknesses and the challenging aspects of our personalities.

Our Heavenly Father knows us through and through, every aspect of our lives and our attitudes. Let’s use our time to ask Him to show us how to use our gifts and abilities, and also ask that he works in us to overcome our failings.

I received this story from a friend, I do not know this author at all, Alan David-Smith II, but he seems to post a lot on Facebook. I cannot confirm the accuracy of the data he quoted but the overall essence of the story is worth considering:

WHAT HAPPENS IN HEAVEN WHEN WE PRAY?

I dreamed that I went to Heaven and an angel was showing me around. We walked side-by-side inside a large workroom filled with angels. My angel guide stopped in front of the first section and said,

“This is the Receiving Section. Here, all petitions to God said in prayer are received.”

I looked around in this area, and it was terribly busy with so many angels sorting out petitions written on voluminous paper sheets and scraps from people all over the world.

Then we moved on down a long corridor until we reached the second section.

The angel then said to me, “This is the Packaging and Delivery Section. Here, the graces and blessings the people asked for are processed and delivered to the living persons who asked for them.”

I noticed again how busy it was there. There were many angels working hard at that station, since so many blessings had been requested and were being packaged for delivery to Earth.

Finally at the farthest end of the long corridor we stopped at the door of a very small station. To my great surprise, only one angel was seated there, idly doing nothing.

"This is the Acknowledgment Section", my angel friend quietly admitted to me. He seemed embarrassed.

"How is it that there is no work going on here?" I asked.

"So sad," the angel sighed. "After people receive the blessings that they asked for, very few send back acknowledgments."

"How does one acknowledge God's blessings?" I asked.

"Simple," the angel answered. Just say, "Thank you, Lord."

"What blessings should they acknowledge?" I asked.

"If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep you are richer than 75% of this world.

If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy, and if you get this on your own computer, you are part of the 1% in the world who has that opportunity."

"If you woke up this morning with more health than illness.. You are more blessed than the many who will not even survive this day."

"If you have never experienced the fear in battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation... You are ahead of 700 million people in the world."

"If you can attend a church without the fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death you are envied by, and more blessed than, three billion people in the world."

"If your parents are still alive and still married.... you are very rare."

"If you can hold your head up and smile, you are not the norm, you're unique to all those in doubt and despair....."

"Ok," I said. "What now? How can I start?"

The Angel said, "If you can read this message, you just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you as very special and you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all."

Have a good day, count your blessings, and if you care to, pass this along to remind everyone else how blessed we all are.....

ATTN: Acknowledge Dept.

"Thank you Lord, for giving me the ability to share this message and for giving me so many wonderful people with whom to share it."

If you have read this far, and are thankful for all that you have been blessed with, how can you not send it on? I thank God for everything, especially all my family and friends.

Malawi News:

Last week I mentioned that the Mid Argyll Malawi Twinning group are planning to send some funds to our twinned Church, Kasamba in Malawi to assist with aid as they face the challenge of Corona Virus.

We have received this message from one of our friends there who works in the health service:

"Dear Abusa ndi Mai Abusa – friends in Mid Argyll

Thank you for the gesture to support the hospitals in Malawi. I am currently working for Operation Smile whereby we provide free surgeries to Children born with Cleft lips or palates . In this work we do surgeries in either of the four Central Hospitals : Kamuzu Central, Mzuzu Central, Zomba Central and Queen Elizabeth Central hospitals. With nutrition clinics in selected district hospitals.

In the era of COVID 19, what is critical are frontline health workers personal protective material (PPE) such as long sleeve, gowns, masks, caps, googles, shoe covers, face shield, gloves sanitizer, hand washing soap . As much as these are some of the items already being used in the health facilities, there has been sudden increased demand and none of the health facilities were prepared for this.

Secondly, in Malawi we do not have the very much needed equipment to manage serious cases of Corona such as ventilators. As such the government has tried to mobilize some and have allocated them to central hospitals only where there is capacity of how to use it.

Thirdly, there is need to support with diagnostic material such as infra thermometers and COVID19 test kits. However, I am optimistic that the UN community will come forward and support with the test kits to complement the government of Malawi.

Lastly, 21 days lockdown which is just around the corner is going to heavily affect the very poor as they live hand to mouth and a day at time for tomorrow will see for itself. They will starve due to lack of savings neither capacity to

stock food. Such families will need food hand out for them not to suffer the effects of lockdown.

For the partnership support to make impact I would propose that we procure PPE material and donate to CHAM Mission health facilities who might not have access to government support and yet some Corona patients would be seeking services there before referral to designated treatment centres. Or alternatively prepare food gift packs to be donated to the very needy in our churches. Eg it can contain 5kg rice, 10kg maize flour, soya pieces, cooking oil 2litres, 2kg sugar, 1kg salt, 3kg beans. There are companies that are amateur's (volunteers?) in such packaging during disasters and could always do it if given the assignment.

For sure the needs are greater than possibly the funding that is available but any help will save a life.

Many thanks

Desiree

Presbytery Prayer Point

You are invited to pray with fellow Presbyters in Argyll this week's prayer:

Lord, keep us under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may rejoice in your comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love.

Lord we pray for those people who are the hidden faces in the midst of the turmoil and upheaval that surrounds us at the moment. We hear much about those working on the frontline keeping us safe and healthy and it is right and proper that we do so and we pray your protection on all of those people but we also need to bring to mind those not in the headlines – the hidden faces of society.

We pray for those who depend on a connection to a group or a place of safety to see them through their own personal difficulties and whose circumstances may worsen as a result of isolation. We bring to mind vulnerable children of families, troubled teenagers, and victims of domestic abuse. Lord, we know these people are at an increased risk at this time and our hearts break for the situations they now find themselves in with little or no relief. We seek your protection for them and that you will inspire those who work in such circumstances to find alternative ways of offering support and care in the face of a loss of personal and direct contact.

We pray too for all those who find themselves stranded in a place far from home and separated from loved ones. We think of migrant and seasonal workers who travelled to their place of work often in a different country prior to the outbreak and who now find themselves without work and pay. We remember too the crews of cruise ships who have been repatriated to their own country and those still stranded on board and now unable to earn as contracts are curtailed. Lord we pray that these groups find strength in their numbers, that in keeping together they can sustain and support one another through these lean times. We also bring to mind those care workers who have opted to stay apart from their family to keep them safe. Carers living in camper vans parked in car parks and those who opt to live in with residents to ensure the safety of the residents and of the carers' families. We visualise the parents working on the frontline who can only communicate with their children via a computer screen as they seek to keep us and them safe at this time. Lord sustain all those who have voluntarily separated themselves from their nearest in a selfless act of love and care for us all.

Lord as the fight to defeat the virus continues, we bring to mind the hidden faces working in laboratories seeking to find a solution that will eradicate the threat. These folks working tirelessly behind the scenes in difficult circumstances and sometime at risk from the virus itself deserve our utmost thanks and blessings and our earnest wish that they stay safe and a solution is found. We pray too for air crews who volunteer to undertake flights to other parts of the world so that vital supplies necessary for frontline staff can be delivered safely and expeditiously. And we think too of ferry crews delivering essential supplies to the islands scattered across our Presbytery including the mail, food supplies, and vital medicines.

Lord as we witness unprecedented arrangements being put in place to deal with the effects of the virus, we bring to mind the hospital and hospice chaplains being recalled to service, especially those known to us here in Presbytery, whose selfless devotion to duty will be crucial in the days ahead. With your encouragement and presence, they will bring succour and comfort to those who need it, especially in the absence of family members who can only stand from afar and watch. We pray your strength and blessing on all of them that they may be sustained in this crucial work in your name and that they will remain safe.

In these days we are reminded once again of the quiet and measured approach taken by funeral directors and crematoria staff as they deal with an increased workload. We pray that in these difficult circumstances final goodbyes can remain dignified and heartfelt albeit at a distance and that those who mourn will still feel your comforting

presence at these times.

Lord God, we bring to mind those hidden faces mentioned here and those that we are aware who quietly and resolutely get on with what needs to be done and seek no glory or thanks for doing so.

We are not people of fear: we are people of courage.

We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity.

We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs

For as long as it takes wherever you call us.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The Psalm for this week is Psalm 34 and here is verses 1 to 14 :

I will bless the Lord at all times;

His praise shall continually be in my mouth

My soul shall make its boast in the Lord;

The humble shall hear of it and be glad.

O Magnify the Lord with me.

And let us exalt His name together.

I sought the Lord and He heard me.

And delivered me from all my fears.

They looked to him and were radiant,

And their face were not asjhamed.

The poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him

And saved him out of all his troubles.

The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him

And delivers them.

O taste and see that the Lord is good;

Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Oh fear the Lord, you His saints!

There is no want to those who fear Him.

The young lions lack and suffer hunger;

But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.

Come you children, listen to me;

I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

Who is the man who desires life,

And loves many days, that he may see good?

Keep yoyr tongue from evil,

And your lips from speaking deceit

Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.

Psalm 34 verses 1 to 14.

New King James Version