

How many Sunday services have we not held since “lockdown” began? I think it is fourteen this Sunday.

Fourteen weeks when we have not met together for worship, and fourteen times we have not chatted over tea after the service. For those who attended services regularly – what difference has it made to you? Have you developed other methods of worship, have you found other things to do on Sunday mornings? Are you quite happy to not be going out to church at 10.00 am or are you keen to get back to worshipping again each week with your friends?

Another question – has anyone who is not a regular “churchgoer” noticed that we are not there on a Sunday? Does it matter, and if so, why?

With the very slight easing of restrictions this week the possibility of re-opening church buildings has begun to be discussed across all denominations. Stewart Shaw the Argyll Presbytery Clerk, and Marilyn Shedden, Chair of the Presbytery Mission committee organised an on line discussion on Tuesday 16th on how and when we should be planning to reopen buildings. The Church of Scotland have issued guidance on the practicalities of worship services within current restrictions, with social distancing, face masks and hand gels.

We also have to bear in mind that in North Knapdale, like many rural congregations, most of those attending are in the “vulnerable” age group.

The overwhelming consensus from today’s discussion is that it is far too soon to consider opening buildings for worship at the moment, and we must wait for further reduction of restrictions before even planning for this.

Another important aspect of the discussion today was on the question of “What will the church look like when the buildings do re-open?”.

Should we try to return to the same as before lockdown? What are we learning about church by having our buildings closed? What is changing in our congregations, and in society during this time of “separation”? What can we learn from this time and should this change how we operate?

These are complex questions and there will be many views on any suggested answers, and your own views would be welcome to get a picture for North Knapdale, so please let me know.

I have picked out some themes from the discussion to give an idea of the breadth and depth of things being considered.

Church is about community and relationships and people miss getting together with friends.

More people are tuning in to “on-line” services than ever go to local Church services.

“On line” gives opportunity to hear services and people from places elsewhere in Argyll, Scotland, and across the World.

On line, or TV services cannot replace getting together locally.

How do we include those who do not have the internet technology to get on line?

The lockdown has demonstrated that we do not need all our buildings.

We could get together in smaller groups when we can, 6 to 8 people, to worship together.

There should be a variety of options for people – small groups, large gatherings, different venues and times.

Large screens in church buildings could be used for a variety of “On line” services.

The church serves the community. How do we continue to care for those who are hurting and in need.?

How do we manage our pastoral care?

In North Knapdale we also have to think about how any changes will influence the proposals to bring together the five Mid Argyll parishes in some way.

So please send me your thoughts and ideas and I can bring them together in another newsletter.

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e-mail: sessionclerk@northknapdale.org

Also on this subject, we have been asked to circulate as widely as possible this message from Marilyn Shedden, convenor of the Presbytery Mission committee on the way forward for the church, and again your views would be very welcome!

- **A Message from Marilyn Shedden – Convener of the Mission Committee**
Please share it widely among your congregation.

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, a group (let's call it Vision Argyll) of about 50 people from across our Presbytery have been having discussions about the way forward after this Covid time.

After some very useful and positive conversations by e-mail, Vision Argyll met via Zoom on Tuesday.

There was much enthusiasm and a lot of wisdom to share, and the technology allowed us to get together in person, which was very welcome.

We are very sensitive to the fact that we wish to include the views, thoughts, reservations and even fears, of all our people.

We wish to have as many ideas considered and every question listened to if possible.

To this end, we would invite you to become involved by giving us your feedback and your thoughts. **We also invite you to share this venture with your own people in the congregations and community.**

Please respond to Stewart and me by July 3rd after which Vision Argyll will meet again to continue our discussions. Argyll@churchofscotland.org.uk

To summarise where we are, at our previous meeting we focused mainly on worship. We discussed the pros and cons of online worship, and felt that this should continue after lockdown is lifted.

We need to find ways to safeguard our ministers as they cannot be expected to do an online service every week with the full busyness of parish work and perhaps other services. We thought about those without internet, those who want to get back into the church building, and all this involves.

We need a blended approach to worship. What about young people?

We talked about different ways of 'doing' worship outside the building eg using the local hotels for a 'parable, a pie and a pint', take the service to the gardens of the housebound, have a service on the beach, in the church car park, on the ferry, in each other's homes...and more.

The church is relational and requires interaction - we are a spiritual community.

We must reach out and bring people together, and think about how we do this.

We remembered that Jesus met people where they were, not necessarily in the synagogue.

Many people, not normally involved with the church have been drawn in to help at this time.

We must find a way to nourish this.

We do feel that this is a time of opportunity and excitement, when we have discovered new ways to worship and to reach out to people who are not normally in the pews on a Sunday.

We are grateful to the wonderful work Susan and the eXp team are doing with young people and we commend this to you.

We wish to consider ways to engage with, and minister to, children in our midst and be sure that they are included in any future planning.

Perhaps you could use these points to share with people and let folk know that as a Presbytery, we are committed to think creatively about the future.

We are committed to include all our people, those with technology and those without, those confined to their homes, and those who find God on the hills, those who are at the youngest end and those who have watched many sunsets, those who wish to be in their church building and those who are not comfortable there.....ALL our people.

We wish to use this time of learning, to find new ways to be a missional presence throughout Argyll and to encourage discipleship for every age.

It is important that everyone knows what is happening as everyone has a part to play and a voice to be heard.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Prayers for our journey, *Marilyn*

This week's Psalm is Psalm 86, a song and prayer from David, while, yet again, he is in distress, hunted by his enemies and cut off from his friends.

Bend an ear, God, answer me.

I'm one miserable wretch!

Keep me safe – haven't I lived a good life?

Help Your servant – I'm depending on You!

You're my God, have mercy on me.

I count on You from morning to night.

Give your servant a happy life;

I put myself in Your hands!

You're well known as good and forgiving,
Big hearted to all who ask for help.
Pay attention God to my prayer;
Bend down and listen to my cry for help.
Every time I'm in trouble I call on You,
Confident that You'll answer.

There is no-one quite like You among the gods, O Lord,
And nothing to compare with Your works.
All the nations You made are on their way.
Ready to give honour to You, O Lord.
Ready to put Your beauty on display,
Parading Your greatness, and the great things You do –
God, You're the one, there's no-one but You!

Train me O God, to walk straight;
Then I'll follow Your true path.
Put me together, one heart and mind;
Then, undivided, I'll worship in joyful fear,
From the bottom of my heart I thank You, dear Lord;
I've never kept secret what You're up to.

You have always been great toward me – what love!
You snatched me from the brink of disaster!
God, those bullies have reared their heads!
A gang of thugs is after me –
And they don't care a thing about You.
But You, O God, are both tender and kind,
Not easily angered, immense in love,
And you never, never quit.

So look me in the eye and show kindness,
Give Your servant the strength to go on,
Save Your dear, dear child!
Make a show of how much You love me
So the bullies who hate me will stand there slack jawed,
As You, God, gently and powerfully
Put me back on my feet.

(Psalm 86 "The Message" 2002 Eugene Peterson)

I have used the "The Message" translation of the bible this week, because I think that it suits this psalm to hear it in this language. Somehow it brings out David's complete dependence on and trust in God. David has no doubt that God loves him and will care for him, even in

the most desperate circumstances, and notwithstanding his many faults and failings – God is big hearted and forgiving!

David's concentration throughout the psalm is on God, and His attributes, others are mentioned only to bring attention to God:

David says – every time I am in trouble I call on you – confident you will answer.

People may have other gods – but no-one quite like God, and nothing compared to His works.

The gang of thugs are after David, but God is tender and kind, not easily angered, immense in love.

At the end David is absolutely confident that his enemies will have to stand aside and watch as God “gently and powerfully put me back on my feet”

Let this be our prayer – for ourselves and for those around us, when we feel down, when we are uncertain, when we are weak or struggling with life:

“God of David's Psalm, you are well known as good and forgiving,

Big hearted to all who ask for help

Pay attention, God, to my prayer;

Bend down and listen to my cry for help

Every time I am in trouble I call on you,

Confident that you will answer.

God, gently and powerfully

Put me back on my feet”

Amen

Daily Hope line

This is introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury. There are three options, you can:

1. Listen to a well-known hymn being sung then listen to a reflection on it, about 15 minutes.
2. Listen to well-known hymns being sung and sing along.
3. Listen to a prayer relevant to today's world

This service is called Daily Hope, the phone number is **0800 804 8044** Phone calls are free.

On line services:

- Online services available from Argyll

The following services are being provided online for local congregations and those who wish to log in from places further afield:

West Kintyre and Gigha – Rev Scott Burton -<https://www.westkintyreandgighachurchofscotland.org/> Worship

The United Church of Bute – Rev Owain Jones - <https://www.unitedchurchofbute.org.uk/>

The Shore Kirk – Rev Janet MacKellar –
<https://sites.google.com/view/theshorekirk/home>
or **<https://www.facebook.com/groups/345399762209092/>**
[Service is available by Phone on](#) 01369 510 932

Ardchattan lw Coll lw Connel – Rev Willem Bezuidenhout <https://www.ardchattanchurch.org.uk/>

West Cowal – Rev David Mitchell
<https://www.westcowalchurches.org.uk>

South Kintyre – Rev Steve Fulcher
www.kintyreparishes.org.uk

Netherlorn Churches Worship Team
<http://www.netherlornchurches.org.uk/>

West Lochfyneside:
<https://www.westlochfyneside.org.uk>

Kilmore and Oban: Rev Dugald Cameron
www.obanchurch.com

Barra and South Uist : Rev Lindsay Schluter(audio only)

Can be accessed via telephone (01871-200336) or the South Uist website
(www.southuistchurchofscotland.com)

eXp facebook page: - a worship and discipleship resource for young people.

<https://www.facebook.com/expdunoon/>

You can find news on our church website: www.northknapdale.org
And our Face Book page – North Knapdale Church.

Contact David Logue – sessionclerk@northknapdale.org

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