

Good Morning! – or afternoon or evening – whenever you have decided is most suitable and practical to read this note, or is it a letter, or an update, or awhatever. You may ask “what does it matter?”, and you would be right – it doesn’t matter what you call it, or when you look at it, but your time of reading, or your view on what this is, will be different to lots of others who are looking at the same thing.

The point I am rather laboriously trying to make is - this can be looked at any time, and the actual description of it is not important. We are used to this and take that for granted.

The internet, and to some extent Television and radio, have the same properties – TV programmes, videos, podcasts, blogs, and all manner of messages, films and writings, can be accessed at any time to suit the reader, watcher or contributor. That is the world in which we live, and culture we share in our community.

We, who have been used to the joy of regular get togethers on Sunday mornings appreciate the benefits of worship and prayer in the same regular place and time as others, but this is an alien concept to many in our communities. We may look forward to the “normality” of regular Sunday worship, but if our commission from Jesus is to “go and make disciples”, and our vision is to share the gospel and the Kingdom of God, we will need to embrace the communication patterns, and the social activity patterns of our neighbours, in order to share how God is alive and at work in our community, and that he loves each person and wants them to know Him. Our Sunday worship services do not effectively meet our culture.

I have been looking over the last while at the Celtic church and how the followers with Columba and many others came into the pagan culture of Britain and brought the light and reality of Christ to the people. They did not open churches – they shared their lives and served the communities with Christlike love, they shared their faith and they trusted God to act and answer prayers.

We can learn a lot from them – as here we are 1400 years later living in this new “post Christian” culture in the old kingdom of Dalriata.

A friend of mine, Scott Brennan has looked into the relevance of the Celtic way of mission for today’s environment, and his blog is well worth a read, if you can access the internet:

<https://www.voiceoftheevangelists.com/>

Please have look in your own time and place!

Rev Douglas Bell.

How sad it is to hear of the passing away of Douglas and our prayers go out to Helen and family as they mourn his loss. Douglas was a great supporter of North Knapdale providing for us a supportive ministry while he was our locum during vacancy, and also, out with that time, providing informal pastoral care during his summer breaks at Castle Sween and latterly from his home at Cairnbaan.

Conversations with Douglas were always encouraging and helpful.

The funeral is most likely to be on the 31st May and the cortege will pass through Tayvallich Village to Carsaig Cemetery between 12.30 and 1.00pm. I should be able to give more precise information next week.

Mid Argyll Mission Plan.

The Mid Argyll Planning group met for the second time on Tuesday evening to share views from the five Mid Argyll parishes (North Knapdale; Glassary, Kilmartin and Ford; Lochgilphead; Ardrishaig; and South Knapdale) on how we see the church going forward in this area. Discussions are at an early stage but the overall consensus is to form one united parish with a team of staff and volunteers led by an ordained person. This is in line with current constraints on finances and reduced numbers of ordained ministers, but more importantly would provide for more flexible and shared use of the resources - people, skills, abilities and finances – from the current parishes across the whole area.

There is still a lot of talking and praying to do - please join us in praying for wisdom and direction as we continue to consider the way ahead.

North Knapdale representatives on the group are: David Logue, Norma Kelly and Catherine Paterson.

Re-opening Tayvallich Church Building

The Kirk session met on the 20th May to discuss the pros and cons of re-opening Tayvallich Church under the continuing restrictions. We are very hopeful that this will be possible soon and I will keep you informed of progress. One thing that is sure, however, is that following this long time without local services, returning to a church service will not be the same as before lockdown, and many people's experiences of TV worship such as "Reflections on the Quay", on line talks, worship on Youtube etc., and zoom get togethers, will have altered expectations and style of our worship together.

We are planning to canvass views from the congregation and community on ideas, formats, times and any other aspects of getting together as a church which you may have thoughts on, so please let me, or other elders know what you are thinking.

House Group:

The House Group has continued to meet weekly over the time of "lockdown" – not so much in one house but in our own houses over the magical "Zoom" software. We have over the period watched and discussed videos, but zoom has allowed us to invite guests from all over the place. We have been visited by many people, including Rev Martin Fair the Moderator of the General assembly, Rev John Bell of Hymn writing fame, Kenny Wilson the local C of S Youth Worker, and others from as far afield as Wales and Norwich who have all talked to us about their "Journey of Faith". This has been really encouraging for us all and we hope to continue to use the flexibility of the internet to share our meetings with people from all over. We do also, of course plan to meet together in a house – once restrictions allow. We regularly have about 12 people meeting on a Friday evening, and would all be delighted to welcome more to join us so if you want to find out more give me or Louise a call.

01546 870 647

Prayer Group

On Monday mornings a few people zoom together to pray for local people and situations in and around our parish. It is so encouraging and wonderful to see how our Father responds to our prayers. Time spent together with God in prayer for others is such a blessing for all.

One hour on Mondays from 9.00am is a great way to start the week.

Please talk to Catherine Paterson for details and how to join in. 01546 603672

Pentecost

This Sunday we celebrate Pentecost and I have taken an excerpt from the thoughts of Jim Wallace, Lord Wallace, Moderator Designate of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, from this week's worship notes on the Church of Scotland website. <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/monthly/2021-may/may-23rd-day-of-pentecost>

Acts 2:1-21

2When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' 13But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

*17 "In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.*

*18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.*

19 And I will show portents in the heaven above

*and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.*
²⁰ *The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.*
²¹ *Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

One difficulty with this passage is its familiarity. There is nothing wrong with being familiar with Scripture, but there is always benefit in trying to read, as if for the first time, to see what stands out.

Stating the obvious, the event associated with the foundation of the Church didn't take place in a church. They "were all together in the one place." (v.1). But whereas there are holy sites and ornate buildings associated with the birth and resurrection of Jesus, I am unaware of any cathedral or blue plaque marking 'the one place'. The location is incidental. Luke is more concerned to describe deafening sound and spectacular sight as each was filled with the Holy Spirit. It's not about place but the impact of the Spirit on people: how they went outside 'the place' and began evangelising to a gathering and increasingly astonished crowd.

Indeed we have become familiar with Peter's powerful speech to the thousands in the crowd. But pause for a moment. Just over seven weeks earlier this man, who is now a fearless preacher, had skulked away, having denied Jesus three times. Wasn't he the man who boldly got out of the boat and started walking across the water to Jesus, but whose courage then failed him (Matthew 14:29-30)? What had changed? The Spirit had emboldened him to fulfil the potential which Jesus had always recognised in him. Are we letting the Spirit today embolden us to fulfil the potential to which we are called both as individuals and as a Church?

The passage then lists the multitude of places represented in the throng that day – everyone there able to hear the 'great things God had done' in their own language. We can speculate about the nature of this phenomenon, but what is clear is that the Spirit was ensuring that no one was left out. Notwithstanding diversity of origin or language, the Spirit was securing unity. The message was for everyone.

That is reinforced by the passage from Joel which Peter uses as his text,
"I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message.

Your young men will see visions and your old men will have dreams.
..even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit."

No discrimination there: men and women; young and old; enslaved and free. Again, familiarity may blunt the impact of what was being proclaimed. At that time, the normal order of things elevated men over women, more readily gave heed to the elderly than entertain the visions of the young and bestowed infinitely greater rights on those who were free over those who were servants.

But the Holy Spirit overturns the established order. What are the barriers of respectability today or the things which have 'aye been' – in our own lives, in our Church, in our country – which the Spirit moves us to break down so that all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (v.21)?

Prayers:

On the day when we celebrate the Church's founding let us pray for her work across Christ's world, in places whose stories we know and in places we can only leave to the knowledge of the heart of God. And especially we remember those places where those who confess Jesus as their Saviour are still persecuted for His sake. May they know the emboldening power of the Spirit of Pentecost and the loving assurance of the Comforter.

We pray for the Church in our land of Scotland, for the Church of Scotland and all denominations that share her mission in cities, towns, villages and countryside and islands. Especially today we pray for those meeting in General Assembly. May they be guided by the Spirit and discern God's will for the Church's future and her witness.

[Some may wish to add prayers reflecting matters of concern – or celebration – in their own congregation or community.]

We pray for those experiencing illness in body or in mind, and for those who practise the healing arts of medicine and nursing. We remember families and communities emerging from pandemic still feeling the pain of loss of loved ones may they experience God's love and comfort through our actions and our words. And as we pray for those whose are feeling despair through the loss of employment or opportunity, we also pray that despite our feebleness we, with the assurance of the Spirit, may bring hope through the practical resolve of a Church ready to play its part in the work of healing and renewal.

Let us pray that in this land and in the world the Spirit will inspire and raise up women and men, young and old, to dream dreams and share a vision of a world where oppression is defeated by justice, where anxiety is vanquished by hope, where creation is cherished and the earth's resources are harvested responsibly for a just sharing, where people everywhere will not be judged by the colour of their skin, or their gender or their creed or their orientation but by the content of their character. Where hate is overcome by love, and where the 'earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

'All this we ask through Christ Jesus, our Lord, Amen.

You can find news on our church website: www.northknapdale.org

And our Face Book page – North Knapdale Church.

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