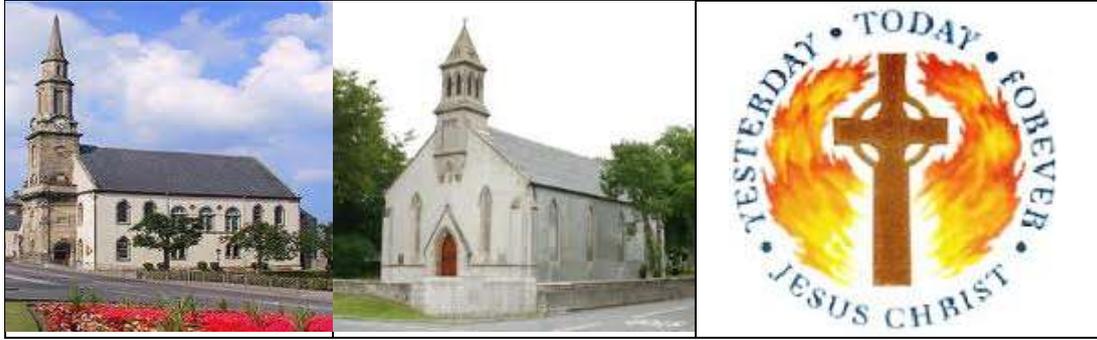


## *From the Minister, Banff and King Edward Parish Churches*



*Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" [ John 20;21]*

9<sup>th</sup> October 2020

**Dear Friends**- everyone connected in any way through Banff Parish Church, at last I have news about when our **church building is reopening**.

The Kirk Session has explored all the many issues in great depth and have now reached agreement about the best balance of allowing people to come to church who wish, ensuring we have done our best to limit any health and safety risks, and meeting the needs of the many who now engage happily with our online services.

Although our halls remain closed for now, Banff Parish church is aiming to reopen for worship inside the church sanctuary on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October and thereafter twice a month starting with 8 November [Remembrance Sunday at 10.45am ], 22<sup>nd</sup> November [communion Sunday], 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December, 3<sup>rd</sup> January with 45 minute services starting usually at 11am. We had a trial service for elders which went well from a procedural point of view. Attending services will be a little different – for example numbers will be restricted to those who advance book and masks must be worn. But we hope the essence of worship will still be real for you, and we look forward to welcoming and sharing with those who can come. The attached letter sets out more details.

We have done all we can to minimise the risk to everyone attending. But it is of course for each person to weigh up their own situation; people should not feel under pressure to come-joining us online is in many ways just as good, and some think better under current circumstances. We will be continuing with our online services, [available via Facebook, website, phone in [on 01261 303464- see flier enclosed ] and CD recordings. If you are unable to access them, let us know and we will see what we can do. King Edward church meanwhile will remain closed for general services but open for occasional very small gatherings for prayer.

We are still working out what will happen on **Remembrance Sunday**, as official guidance is as yet unclear. We are considering for both Banff and King Edward a small service at the war memorials with very very restricted numbers. No-one else from the public will be able to turn up, but we hope to have a facility on the ground of each church whereby people can come individually to lay down a poppy within a cross on the ground and have their individual moment of reflection at their own convenient point of the day. The online service will be available as usual.

**Harvest** is being celebrated this weekend in different ways online, with separate activities for children; and I have written a related article for the Banffshire journal for next week. Outside Banff Parish Church we are carrying on the spirit of harvest for the next 2 weeks over the tattie holidays, by having a harvest hamper outside the church .. please feel free to take or give donations; and while you are there, you may use the pens provided to draw and add a leaf to our harvest tree.

## *From the Minister, Banff and King Edward Parish Churches*

We are hoping in Banff to share **communion** for limited numbers on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November: a piece of bread and a small amount of juice should be pre provided to everyone at their seats, in little glasses. We invite others to join us online where you can take a piece of bread and juice in your own home along with us. We did something like that as an experiment in Holy Week and it went well; since then the Church of Scotland has approved that process

Away from church, **pupils in first year at Banff Academy would like to write to anyone local who is relatively housebound** eg due to age, shielding or other health reasons, both to share with you and to help their letter writing skills. If you would welcome such a communication which might develop to more than one letter in time, please leave a message with the church office or me by 24<sup>th</sup> October. As there are 180 Pupils involved, the Academy really hope to have a lot of people willing to participate and help the pupils in this way. The church will act as intermediary addressee so that personal details can be protected initially.

We were all sad when **Vera** retired from active service with us as Pastoral Assistant, and we had hoped to have a service in church to say thank you properly. That has not been possible and is not something Vera really would want. We now plan in Banff to have a collection for her so we can say thank you in a more meaningful way than has been possible so far. If you would like to donate, please send it to the church or put it through the church letter box or give it to an Elder, marking it of course for Vera

**Update regarding finances** ; Like a number of churches and other organisations, our finances were hit hard by the lockdowns. But thanks to our excellent finance team, we have taken some really positive steps to get back to a level of normality. The marathon fundraising scheme raised in total about £9000 which was amazing- well done to the many people involved. It remains our hope that we can by the end of the year be back into a position of having met all our debts and not be in deficit but we will still need a major programme of fund raising well beyond this year to try and replenish what we have lost, and be able to undertake again some of the activities and services we previously offered. We are not for example in a position to replace Vera or Karen our Children and family worker in the near future.

Thank you to all who are giving and donating, and supporting the church. It may not look like it always, with doors closed , but your church has been very active over the past months of the pandemic, despite our volunteer and leader numbers being much restricted by the lockdown. We drew up a list of all that the church has managed to do since the virus started - its encouraging – over 50 actions ranging from our fundraising and financial recovery programme ; our Deveron radio and online services reaching more and more people and now available also by phone; letters of encouragement to the community, support to various community organisations, phonecalls to folk by elders, and others; Bridge magazines still being produced and delivered ; multiple children’s activities online and a few outside buildings; more generally a host of encouraging material on facebook and website. We like other churches have had to adapt, and our kirk session and sub-groups have had many many meetings by zoom.

Its not easy with very limited numbers, so please continue to pray for your church, and all connected to it, and all working away to show God’s care. And know you are in the prayers of others in your church, including myself. The battle against the virus goes on so we must all hold on to God’s assurances He is with us; we just have to keep the faith, draw on His help and Spirit, and keep going. If anyone is finding it all too difficult, please do pick up the phone and phone me or a church leader.

*May God bless you.*

*Yours faithfully, David*

*From the Minister, Banff and King Edward Parish Churches*



Good news for members of the congregation unable to hear the recorded church services on computer, mobile phone, etc.

The service by Rev David Locke can now be heard on your normal landline telephone *at any time* by dialling 01261 **303464**.

You do not have to say anything, just listen -- and if it is not for you, then hang up. Give it a try. It should last approx. 45 minutes total.

The cost would be as for a normal local phonecall.