

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



*Dear Friends* – everyone part of the family of people who have contact through Banff and King Edward parish churches- I hope and pray you are staying well and positive. Please know you are not alone in all that is going on, and we in the church will try and support you.

A couple of people have asked me if this virus is something an angry God has imposed on people to punish us for our sins, and I say a very clear no. It's not God wrathfully punishing us, but it is something humankind has brought on itself. We have known for many years of the risks of global virus, but done very little to prevent it. On the contrary God will be with us to help us battle it, as He was with us in World War 2 which likewise was brought on by humans, but also I believe was overcome by humans open to God's help and guidance

Jesus said *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[ believe also in me... the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid [john 14 v1, 25-27]* It is said that the bible says do not be afraid 365 times, once for each day somehow. Fear is something we all might have at times, but its something that can be held at bay by trust in God and perhaps by daily reminding ourselves of Jesus' promises and opening up to His Spirit to guide us and assure us

These are hard times akin to the second world war to my mind, when we face challenges, anxieties and fears, but also hope that we can overcome together with the right spirit. Although I have heard stories of selfishness at the supermarkets, when I have been out and about, I have seen people being friendly and smiling and positive, and read many stories of people wanting to care for others. Let us keep going in that spirit, helped by the Spirit of Jesus which can give us inner peace, hope, and guidance, but also challenge us to live day by day with grace and openness to our neighbours.

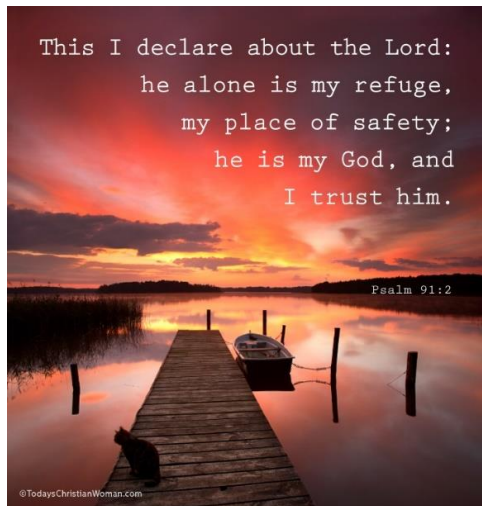
The words of King George seem very relevant today. This is what he said to our country at the turn of the year after the start of world war two ;*"And I came to the gate of the year, and looking out into the darkness, said to the man who stood there" Give me a light that I may go safely out"; And He said " stretch forth your hand into the hand of God- that will be better unto you than any light"*. We can trust in the light of Jesus to guide our paths, if we are open to Him.

Someone said we are to self-isolate from physical social activity; but not social activity which we can do by trying different ways of mutual support -by phone, letter postcard or by email and other means through the internet. Your church will try to help. We have been busy responding day by day to the new guidelines from government and church authorities, and bit by bit had to shut down all activities including Sunday services. But we are now exploring actively how we can do more to help people, and are open to suggestions.

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Banff parish church will be open this Sunday [22<sup>nd</sup>] for individual prayer and reflection but numbers at any one time must be limited to just 5 people. I hope that Banff Parish church will likewise be open each Sunday afternoon in future from 2pm to 3pm. You will also find resources to help uplift folk on our website and facebook pages.

Activities inside church may have been radically curtailed but fear not, for our God is still very much open for business. We can talk with Him in prayer anywhere and indeed I encourage you to do so, praying for ourselves and others. I put this prayer up on Facebook earlier as one we can all say.



*Heavenly Father, help us keep trusting.*

*Give us strength, and help us cope with whatever is to come. Help us be good neighbours and people of grace even in the face of difficulty.*

*We pray for our neighbours and for the vulnerable and isolated at this time. We pray for all involved in bringing medical and practical care. Guide political and medical leaders to make wise and caring decisions.*

*Hear o God all the unspoken prayers of our hearts. We ask them through your son, Jesus Christ Amen*

Can I please ask you to pray especially on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at 7pm and light a candle along with others around our country, as part of a National Day of Prayer [ or do it whenever you seems appropriate to you]

The Church of Scotland has joined with most major churches across the country in this response to the Covid-19 pandemic Taking place on Sunday 22 March, people of faith are being encouraged to light a candle and place it in their window at 7pm.\* we are asked to "join in prayerful solidarity with this witness", for the candle as "a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, the source of hope in this life." The following prayer can be used when lighting the candle:

*For all that is good in life, thank you,*

*For the love of family and friends, thank you,*

*For the kindness of good neighbour and Samaritan stranger, thank you.*

*May those who are vulnerable, hungry or homeless, experience support,*

*May those who are sick, know healing,*

*May those who are anxious or bereaved, sense comfort.*

*Bless and guide political leaders and decision-makers, with wisdom,*

*Bless and guide health workers and key workers, with strength and well-being, Bless and guide each one of us, as we adapt to a new way of living.*

*And may the light shining from our windows,  
across road and wynd, glen and ben, kyle and isle,  
be reflected in our hearts and hands and hopes.*

*Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.*

Yours Sincerely, *David*

\* Please take all necessary fire precautions when using a lit candle. Ensure you remain with the lit candle at all times, and do not leave it to burn if you leave the room. Ensure there are no fabrics or materials such as curtains near the candle.