



# Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney

## Scottish Episcopal Church

### Newsletter – Wednesday 6 May 2020

#### From the Bishop

In many small aspects of life we are adjusting to social distancing.

Each day we have a number of deliveries to our home: post, parcels, prescriptions from the pharmacist. Each time the person rings the doorbell, then goes to stand half way down the path. When I open the door I see the delivery on the step, and I wave at the delivery person. We don't always speak, but we do wave.

Last week Bishop Hugh, Roman Catholic Bishop of Aberdeen, dropped off a letter while out on his afternoon walk. I stood at my door, he stood in the street, and we checked on each other – yes we were both doing OK, and yes it is difficult, but there is so much good to be thankful for in the churches. Then much waving and he was off.



As we await directions from the Prime Minister and the Scottish Government concerning the lifting of the strict lock-down, the College of Bishops are in conversation. What will we need to be doing as churches to enable people to gather for worship once again? Our conversations are taking place in partnership with the Scottish Government, and with the leaders of other churches. We are aware of regional differences and know that the needs of our communities are not all the same. We have no firm plans as yet, so as we gather regularly (by zoom) to discuss these things, we ask for your prayers.

What is clear to us all is that when we say we are eager to get back to church, to be able to meet together, the details of how we meet will be very significantly different to how things were before the coronavirus crisis. We know that the virus will still be among us, and the same people who are particularly vulnerable now will continue to be vulnerable. We know there will be no shaking hands, but there will be a lot of waving!

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#### **Provincial Worship – Sunday 10 May – Easter 5**

11am: The Rt Revd Dr John Armes, will lead a celebration of the Eucharist from Edinburgh. The link to the service will be on the Scottish Episcopal Church website and Facebook page.

7pm Sunday, light a candle, place it in your window, and pray for all affected by the coronavirus crisis.

I am sending out a news-letter every week. I would love to hear from you – tell us what are doing with your time, what is helping you to pray and stay close to God, what is helping you to remain hopeful and faithful. Please send your news to me at : [bishopanne@aberdeen.anglican.org](mailto:bishopanne@aberdeen.anglican.org)

## From Mother Mary Agnes, Society of Our Lady of the Isles, Westing, Unst



My hermit lifestyle is not so much about 'lockdown' as about a type of isolation better known as solitude, which comes from a person's obedience to a particular call.

Of course, words like 'isolation' and 'obedience' are often repugnant to society, but for SOLI whenever I think of the monastic life and vows, I think of both as - *of love*. For example, the 'of love' bit which I mentally add to the end of each vow, changes the whole concept of its meaning. Therefore, Poverty, becomes the Poverty of Love, Obedience, the Obedience of Love, and so on, thus transforming the perceived hardship of 'obedience' into a greater positivity, and more importantly, into the joy of spiritual growth.

I am conscious of many folk, struggling to stay close to God during this time of lockdown, of wanting to be obedient for the good of all but finding it contrary to their usual instinct, for not everyone is called to solitude. Nevertheless, the enforcement of this temporary, if seemingly prolonged, isolation is crucial, and if lived out 'in love' will bring each of us, to a more fruitful, new beginning... Mercifully, our life in God is not about 'self' but entirely about love!

### **A request for help from Léon van Ommen, who is a member of St Ninian's, Seaton, and a member of the Provincial Liturgy Committee.**

*In times of lockdown, research continuous! For a research project on autism and liturgy I am looking for participants. If you (self-)identify as autistic / on the autism spectrum and are willing to share your experience of worship and liturgy, please get in touch with me ([leon.vanommen@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:leon.vanommen@abdn.ac.uk)). People anywhere on the autism spectrum, including non-verbal, and of all ages, are welcome to join. The project is based at the Centre for the Study of Autism and Christian Community, at the University of Aberdeen. Ethical permission has been obtained from the University. Please email me for more information, I'd love to hear from you!*

Léon van Ommen.

Lecturer in Practical Theology, University of Aberdeen

## From Ray Brown, Vestry Secretary, St Clements Church, Aberdeen

I was wondering with us all been officially jailed for the last 5 weeks if we have learned anything about ourselves or our surroundings that we never knew before.

One of the things I've started to notice is that I don't have to drive many miles to get fresh air. I just have to step out my back door to realise it's there waiting for me. With a distinct lack of lorries and cars on the road next to me I have wonderful fresh air on tap (so to speak).

I've noticed my memory seems to be better. A distinct lack of noise from the afore mentioned traffic means my concentration level has increased. I seem to be able to respond quicker to anything going on around me. I think my agitation levels have dropped considerably.

These I'm sure are all minor things that to be honest I don't know if I'm dreaming them or there is possibly a grain of truth in what I'm saying however wouldn't it be nice if the status quo was to remain after we are released from jail.

As a boy I was brought up in the fifties when there was very little traffic on the road. We were able to play in the street with our footballs, play cricket using the lamppost as the wicket, play tennis in the summer using the black tar line on the road as a tennis court the girls were able to play with their skipping ropes and as children (boys or girls) we could all join in. Which adds another important thing activity that has just popped into my head, we used to walk home from school. Even if we had to cross 4 streets to get to school and return home in the afternoon. Nobody to pick us up in 4x4's in those days. When we went to the Big School, which normally was a little away, we were able to take our bikes (if we owned one) or once again it was that glorious transport 'Our Feet'.

The highlight of the week for myself and I'm sure others was church on a Sunday. Getting dressed up in our Sunday best and as a family going to the services. Morning and Night.



I write this because I've been thinking. With our reduced activity recently and the Global threat from this pandemic has anyone noticed how many people have been saying things like, 'with Gods help I'm hoping he'll protect me from the horrible decease'. I don't think that the expression 'god help us' has been said so often as it seems to be today. I'm wondering how many people are starting to notice that there might be something or someone missing in their lives. Someone who maybe earlier in their lives they turned to when things were a bit rough but have over the years had forgotten. If something good is to come out of this maybe it will be that all of us can now start to look to our hearts and thank him for his love and I hope his protection from this decease. We are starting to get a glimpse of what life was like before our tech age and the things we enjoyed. Maybe it wasn't as bad as we thought it was.

This year St Clements celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I still feel it's the highlight of my week under normal times. I know from speaking on the phone to my friends in our church they are all looking forward to getting back and do the things that we enjoy doing on a Sunday. I have a feeling that we might be joined by others who find their way back who may have been missing. We will welcome them back.

God Bless Stay Safe