

# Aberdalgie & Forteviot

(Church of Scotland) OSCR Charity No. SC044503

July 2021



[www.aberdalgieandforteviot.co.uk](http://www.aberdalgieandforteviot.co.uk)

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One phrase we have often heard repeated in the past year or more is that ‘we are living in unprecedented times.’ We have no similar experience to compare these times to, other than the two great wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of the mottoes of which was: ‘Keep calm and carry on’. As I take up the post of Interim Moderator with your parish I am very aware that this is something that you have managed to do very admirably through all the changes that have come your way, not least of which is the demitting of your Minister the Rev. James Aitchison. I know the sadness of both saying goodbye to a minister and of being a minister who is saying goodbye to friends and letting go of commitments; I also know some of the feelings and emotions involved. I am sure that you will be keeping James and Louise in your thoughts and prayers at this difficult time as I am keeping them, and all of you, in my prayers too and praying for future peace and blessings for them and for you.

So your parish is now what is described as a ‘vacant’ charge. I always think that this word is a bit of a misnomer, for your parish is very obviously not vacant but full of the people of God continuing to do God’s work. It’s like the myth of the empty land in the Old Testament: the ruling classes, and their families and some of the artisans, and others, were taken away in exile to Babylon. The land was ‘emptied’, yet we are also told that the people of the land remained and life went on. You have a very able and dedicated Kirk Session, many gifted and dedicated members of your church, a wonderfully developed mission plan and vision for the future, a very accomplished locum in the Rev Sandy Gunn, and myself, and all of this will help to keep everything going while you are ‘vacant’ - life will go on.

However, there is one certainty that is becoming very apparent throughout this period of pandemic and that is also becoming apparent throughout even the beginning of this period of vacancy; life will be changing. We are looking forward, hopefully, to an end or a lightening of the current Covid restrictions, looking forward to a ‘new normal’ being established, for most of us accept now that life will never return to the normal that we had. Our National Church was already beginning to make plans to cope with a changed and changing society, reducing numbers, finances and resources before the pandemic came and these plans have now been escalated in scope and consequence. The Church of Scotland will be operating with an £11 million deficit this year; obviously, this is something that cannot be sustained. Already cuts in costs in the central administration of the church have resulted in a 30% reduction and now there is a need to reduce the numbers of ministries posts. Every Presbytery has been given a reduced number of ministries posts and a directive to produce a Mission Development Plan by Dec 2022 that will achieve this reduction by 2025. Meanwhile any churches becoming vacant will not be able to call a minister and, unfortunately, Aberdalgie and Forteviot parish will fall into this category.

Perth Presbytery is also in the process of uniting with Stirling, Dunkeld and Meigle, Dundee and Angus Presbyteries and each Presbytery has been given a reduced number of ministries posts; so even after the union the total number will not change.

The future is an undiscovered country (if you follow Star Trek you’ll know this reference); we all await with eager anticipation or some trepidation to see what will emerge. There is a lot of work and planning in process so it is difficult to say what exactly will happen but your Kirk Session, the Rev Gunn and I will keep you informed whenever we hear any news. If you are interested in knowing more of the decisions made at the recent General Assembly, Life and Work have published a very informative free supplement which can be found here: [life-and-work-ga2021-supplement.pdf](https://www.lifeandwork.org/life-and-work-ga2021-supplement.pdf) ([lifeandwork.org](http://lifeandwork.org)).

Meanwhile...Keep calm and carry on, or even better... ”Be alert, stand firm in the faith, be brave, be strong. Do all your work in love”. (1 Cor 16:13) with all God’s blessings

Rev Lis

**Interim Moderator:** Rev. Lis Stenhouse; Tel: 01577 842128; [estenhouse@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:estenhouse@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**Locum Minister:** Rev. Sandy Gunn; Tel: 01738 443216 or 07703 469020; [sandygunn@btinternet.com](mailto:sandygunn@btinternet.com)

**Session Clerk:** Roger Ward; Tel: 01738 637720 or 07930 000616; [crpward37@gmail.com](mailto:crpward37@gmail.com)

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Rev. James Aitchison has left the manse and is currently and temporarily living in Edinburgh. If you wish to communicate with him and Louise then any mail sent to the manse will be redirected to their new address. The Kirk Session has agreed to set up a bank account for anyone who wishes to contribute towards a farewell gift (not decided but probably a cheque); please send any contribution either by bank transfer to the Bank of Scotland, sort code 80:22:60; a/c no. 11748668 'Aberdalgie & Forteviot church'; or by cheque to Mrs. Lesley Mackay, our Treasurer, at 29, Craigie View, Perth PH2 0DP. Enclosed you will also find a letter from James to all of us, saying thank you and goodbye.

For your information an agreement reached in 2014 by all parties (Presbytery and the two linked Kirk Sessions) was that when Rev. James Aitchison demitted office the manse would be sold. This will happen shortly, organised by the Church of Scotland. It is unlikely, in the current climate, that we shall be allowed to call another minister. There are many unknowns right now regarding the future for the Church of Scotland. Following the General Assembly we await a new Presbytery Plan, but I am optimistic that we will retain both our identity as a parish and our church buildings although nothing is guaranteed. The expression 'use it or lose it' springs to mind. The walled garden at Aberdalgie will remain a part of our church premises and will be used as a community as well as a church asset; development of the garden is part of the ongoing Aberdalgie Project and work will start shortly, now that the annexe is completed. There will be an official opening ceremony for the annexe when Covid allows, by which time we will be able to use the kitchen and offer you a 'cuppa'! If you would like any further information before the next Newsletter do ring me; I may not have many answers but I am happy to hear from you. In both church buildings you can find a copy of the Parish Annual Report which is available for you to take away.

You will be aware that Covid restrictions are starting to ease slightly and these were discussed at our recent Kirk Session meeting, as well as our future pattern of worship. The next service of worship is at **Aberdalgie on Sunday 4th July, at 10am**. This will be Elder-led for Sandy Gunn will be leading worship at Aberuthven. Thereafter we shall revert to **WEEKLY** services once again, so the next one will be at **Forteviot on Sunday 11th July, BUT AT THE OLD TIME OF 9.30am**. From that date **all services of worship will be at 9.30 am**, in order to allow the minister time to take a second service at Dunning at 11am. On Sunday 18th July it will be at Aberdalgie at 9.30, Sunday 25th July at Forteviot at 9.30, and so on. This information will also be on our website, which is still being improved and updated, [www.aberdalgieandforteviot.co.uk](http://www.aberdalgieandforteviot.co.uk). Other changes you will notice are that we can now sing hymns, but with masks still on; the words of the hymns will be printed and placed in the pews at least 72 hours in advance. While it is still necessary to book a place to attend worship, by contacting me, it is now possible to increase the seating capacity, so long as we maintain social distancing. I regret it is too complicated to return the pew cushions yet (but you can bring your own and take it home with you). We are not yet able to conduct a celebration of Holy Communion, but we have put Sunday 21st November in the diary as a tentative date for such a service; we very much hope we will be able to have one earlier than that if conditions allow.

Other dates for your diary are **Harvest Thanksgiving on Sunday 24th October; Remembrance Sunday on 14th November;** and a **Christmas Eve service at 6.30 pm Friday 24th December**.

If you receive this Newsletter by post do please let me know if you could receive it by email, without undue inconvenience, for it will save us postage!

**Roger Ward**