

# Aberdalgie & Forteviot

(Church of Scotland) OSCR Charity No. SC044503

March, 2021



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## Re-opening of our churches for Worship

We are happy to say that our churches can now open for worship. We shall be reopening **Forteviot** church on **Sunday 4th April at 10:00 a.m.** We shall continue to hold worship services on the first and third Sundays of the month in Forteviot until further notice; covid instructions are attached. Our recently updated website will offer a sermon and prayers for every Sunday. **We hope to see you very soon!**

Dear Friends,

The Pandemic has put a stop to many of the things we have all taken so much for granted, but there are things it has not stopped.

Since March last year, and except for a few months before Christmas we have not been able to use any of our Church buildings for worship and the other activities that take place there, but this has not stopped our members showing Christ's love to one another and to those in their wider community. The pandemic has not stopped our members praying for those in need, nor from helping in other ways: telephoning, writing and even collecting and delivering shopping to those who have been house bound.

Though unable to gather together in our usual place of worship, many of us have found other ways of engaging in worship; by reading devotional books, by listening to services on the radio and watching them on the television or internet, and though these media may not be everyone's preferred options for worship, through them, Sunday by Sunday and other days too, many of us have found ourselves joining together with Christians around the world in the worship of our Lord.

The work behind the scenes which enabled our various places of worship to open, even for a few months, has been immense. The Session Clerk, Fabric Convener, Finance Convener, Health and Safety lead, Communications Team, Elders and other volunteers have ensured that our churches are safe places for people to enter. Without the commitment, initiative and hard work of so many, our churches would have remained closed for the entire period from March 2020 until now and we would not be ready to reopen (safely) when permitted to do so.

As I write (March 2021) the Scottish Government has announced that it is cautiously optimistic and is now easing some of the restrictions put in place to combat the spread of the Covid 19 Virus and its variants. We too must be cautiously optimistic and pending Government permission, we will be able to gather again to join in the worship, the life and the witness of the local church, as well as the Universal Church.

You may be aware that the Kirk is undergoing necessary organizational changes (see below the Report from

Mr. Ron Harrison, our Presbytery Elder), and though these changes will impact on all congregations of the Church of Scotland, let us encourage ourselves with the thought that our congregation is but one small part of the Universal Church, which is the body of Christ, made up of all Christians and that this Universal Church has not been struck a fatal blow, nor has it been diminished, it is Christ's Church and He will ensure that it will persevere and overcome.

When we start to re-gather, let us all come with a greater resolve to be part of a worshipping and witnessing fellowship which is committed to the reverent worship of God and to the authentic witness of Christ to others.

*James*

**Minister:** Rev. James Aitchison, The Manse, Aberdalgie, Perth PH2 0QD 01738 446771

**Session Clerk:** Roger Ward, Flat A2, Oaklands, Pitheavlis Cresc., Perth PH2 0JA

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**Times of Change:** Many of you will be aware that there are plans for change on the horizon for the Church of Scotland. We wanted to give you some intimation of what is likely to happen in the coming months and how it may impact our parish.

**Presbytery Reform:** Across the wider church, work on Presbytery reform is now accelerating. The goal is to create a new structure reducing the overall number of Presbyteries down to nine from the current forty or so. Locally the plan is to form a new enlarged Presbytery incorporating the former Presbyteries of Angus, Dundee, Dunkeld & Meigle, Perth and Stirling. This will require an Act of Union to be approved at this summer's Zoom meeting of the General Assembly. The name proposed for the new Presbytery is "The Presbytery of Perth" and it will be headquartered in Perth.

The legislation would provide for the new Presbytery to begin operation early in 2022 and provides for the setting up of a Transition team to work through the many practical problems detailing how the new Presbytery will function. There are many complexities around OSCR registration, new structures, the number of standing committees, the format of Presbytery meetings, new banking and financial arrangements and the appointment of full-time officers which still need to be settled. As next steps a virtual conference [25<sup>th</sup> March] and an "in hunc effectum" meeting after Easter have been called for current Presbyters to discuss and approve the final version of the Act of Union.

In parallel with this Presbytery reform initiative the current Perth Presbytery's Planning and Development Committee is pushing ahead with its goal of reviewing all charges in the bounds before the new Presbytery comes into being. All these developments are against the continuing background of major financial pressures on the wider Kirk and staffing pressures based on a plan for only 600 ministers to serve almost 1200 charges. Your prayers for the Kirk during all these major changes are vital.

Your Presbytery Elder, Ron Harrison [01764 684104] can provide more detail if you have questions.

### **Read the Bible; it's user-friendly—and we offer technical support on Sundays!**

**Pastoral Care:** Keeping in touch with all members of the congregation in normal circumstances is difficult, as Elders do indeed grow older, and during lockdown it becomes impossible; but with some Elders having recently stepped down trying to reallocate each parish member to an Elder District is a daunting task. If you feel a calling to become an Elder do please, in confidence, let me or the Minister know. Meanwhile we are discussing the possibility of a different system which will still mean you have an allocated Elder but some of their duties will be shared by others, who may not themselves be Elders (for all sorts of good reasons). They will be part of a small Pastoral Team who will regularly telephone those who are lonely, frail, live alone, or have other needs who are likely to appreciate both pastoral and, on occasion, practical help. It is hoped that other members of the congregation will also be telephoned regularly, but less often, and there will of course be an opportunity to 'unsubscribe'! With a reduction in active Elders some changes must be looked at. If you feel you could help please, again in confidence, let me or the Minister know. It is a simple fact that the size of your Kirk Session has been reduced in number, at least for the moment and now has Elders by name and Elders by nature—new blood is needed! If you have views please share them with us; we need your prayers and your help. **Roger**

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