

St Nicholas Church, Prestwick

The Thought for the Week

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021

I am writing these few words on 6<sup>th</sup> January, Twelfth Night, the 12 days of Christmas Festivities having come to their traditional end. It is the time to take down the tree and the decorations, collect up the cards and eat the last of the mince pies. Our Church was looking quite splendid these past weeks and once again we owe a huge debt to Anne and her Flower Ladies and the members of the Thursday Team who worked so hard to organise everything. It was very obviously a labour of love, and though so few of us were able to enjoy them on Sunday mornings, I was delighted that, thanks to the splendid glass entrance doors to St Nicholas, hundreds of passers-by could look in and admire the tree, so beautifully lit in the Chancel.

So, once again, we find ourselves in “lockdown”, not a brief circuit breaker, but one that is likely to last for weeks, and I must admit that my heart sank when the First Minister made the announcement on Monday, for it means that once again our Sunday worship is cancelled because of this Covid 19 induced nightmare. I had been hoping against hope that services could continue, but it was not to be. Naturally, I am deeply disappointed.

As a church, thanks to the magnificent planning and hard work of Craig and Margaret and their Team, we had taken all the necessary precautions to ensure a safe environment for our two Sunday services, but this new variant of the virus is having a very real impact and we should play our part to help reduce the opportunities for it spreading in the community, and overwhelming our wonderful NHS.

But it isn't just about Sunday worship. Though I am devastated that I won't be seeing familiar faces for a while, “lockdown” at this time of year is not great. The cold weather and the dark nights present a very real challenge, especially for those who live on their own, and now that schools are closed, there are huge pressures on parents with young children. We need to continue to look after each other, to keep in touch with each other in whatever ways we can. We all need to dig deep to draw on the resources necessary just to cope with the pressures that are bound to come with any period of prolonged “confinement”.

So, though our Church building is closed, our Church is still open – please know that I am at the end of a telephone if you are feeling a bit overwhelmed by it all. If you know of anyone who might welcome a telephone call or a note from me, don't hesitate to let me know.

I know full well that we have to face up to the uncomfortable truth that, to a greater or lesser degree, as the pandemic continues to disrupt our lives, whether we like it or not, all of us have been affected emotionally, mentally, spiritually. We have all taken a hit, whether we admit it or not.

Yes, we are very heartened by the fact that the vaccine has become available, but it will not necessarily cure all our ills, and I know quite a few folk who can be described as “the walking wounded” because of the isolation, the pain of not being able to see loved ones, the awful loneliness.

This new “lockdown” has left me feeling a bit flat, if the truth be told!

But, there is within each one of us a basic resilience that can keep us going. None of us knows how all of this will end. And none of us should be so reckless to assume we do. So, we can do what we can in these ensuing weeks, for ourselves and for each other.

So, here are my plans for the rest of January – to continue to pray each day for all the members on our Congregational Roll , district by district, and to try to keep in touch with many of our senior, housebound and chronically sick folk by phone or letter.

We are very fortunate here in Prestwick, with its wonderful prom, its delightful Main Street, and a host of great walks in and around the town. There is plenty of fresh air. If truth be known, I have never been one for the “great outdoors”, preferring to stay in with a good book. Well, I have been doing both since this began last March, and I have met a host of lovely people along the way, which has been an added blessing! At one point I purchased an electric bike, but I have since sold it – that is another story for another time!

Those of us with access to the internet are spoiled for choice – Facebook, Twitter, Facetime, and a whole host of other social media links, allow us to keep in touch with family and friends.

I have two books on the go just now – “Shuggie Bain” which recently won the Booker Prize and “The Boys who Danced with the Moon”.

I love listening to Classic FM and Radio Four and immersing myself in the music and programmes provided; and now that I have a Smart TV, my treat to myself at Christmas, I am binge watching “The Crown”.

So, all in all, I have little about which to complain, when all is said and done!

We are in the afterglow of Christmas when we celebrated “the Light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it”.

Maybe your faith is fretted due to all of this; your ability to believe in the goodness of God has been tested beyond breaking point. I sympathise with you completely.

All I would say is this – even if you are finding faith difficult, God has promised not to lose faith in us.

Please, during these troubling times, don’t shut God out; know that the light that came in Christ is still burning.

Sometime this year, things will change, and we can look forward to that, but until then, we are where we are, and we have to cope with the moment as best we can.

Remember this, God, in Christ, promises to share every moment with us.

“I will not leave you nor forsake you,” is His promise.

The Revd Fraser R Aitken

Locum Minister