



The Minister's Desk

22 September 2020



Dear brothers and sisters,

I start to write this newsletter as we await the news from our Governments as to whether they are going to impose another full lockdown in response to the increase in rates of the Covid-19 infection. I'm sure we all have our own views on what or who may be responsible for this increase or indeed who has been irresponsible and caused the numbers to rise sharply, but we will all have to abide by the collective wisdom that will guide our movements over the next few months. The important thing is that lives are protected.

How exactly all of this will impact on the Sunday Services we are now providing we will have to wait and see. As it is I have been conducting a shorter service on a Sunday at 10am with people being asked to contact John Irvine, our Session Clerk, if they want to reserve a seat. My thanks go to John for being willing to do this as well as to all of those who have been helping as part of the Welcoming Team each week. Perhaps understandably, due to the advice that accompanied our reopening regarding who should or should not think of attending, we have not had the problem of having to turn people away as there have always been spare seats available. For this reason we are going to dispense with the booking system from the first Sunday in October. This means that you will no longer have to book a seat if you want to attend although we will still have to restrict our numbers to around 35 each week.

For those who have been attending it has, of course, been good to see friends and to worship in the sanctuary once again though with masks worn throughout and no singing allowed (or at least aloud - you can still sing in your heart!) the experience has been a little bit surreal. I have been making every effort to make the service joyful as well as thought provoking as I do with every service I lead, aided by our organist Robert Newth and the multi-media equipment we have in the church. Unfortunately, as many of you will know, technology can sometimes let us down and I appreciate everyone's patience with me as I do my best to keep everything going. In saying that, if you think you could help me to improve things please do get in touch.

Please be assured that your spiritual wellbeing is as important to me as your physical welfare. For that reason our online services have continued throughout lockdown and I appreciate the kind words of encouragement I have received in response to them. There have been a significant number of views on Facebook for our Sunday and Midweek services. Since the end of May edited recordings have also been posted on a local landline number for those who cannot access them online [01698 638255 - charged at the local rate]. According to the stats the uptake for this has been very low and so I will be reviewing the provision of the telephone service over the next two weeks to determine whether it should continue, taking into account the time it takes to edit and upload the recordings as well as the cost. Please let me know if this service has been of any value to you or you think you might use it in the future.

Meanwhile we are also gearing up at South Wishaw to take over the housing and running of the local food bank in March 2021 at the request of the Basics Food Bank (Lanarkshire) charity. This will mean that we will need to be fully aware of the practices and restrictions that may still be in place due to this pandemic. We will also need to put in place suitable storage facilities and organize additional volunteer help to ensure that there will be a smooth handover of responsibilities for this important work for our community. This is all part of the development of the ministries we have been intending launching with the construction of the new annex in the grounds of our Church at East Academy Street. When this will be able to go ahead we are not sure as it is still with NL Council's Planning Dept. However we need to be prepared to develop the ministries of our Church for the benefit of our community whether the new building is ready or not. Let's be honest, we have an excellent suite of buildings already which have been vastly underused for ministry. The lockdown has only served to highlight this. As your minister I am determined that this will never be seen to be the case again. If you want to join me in developing this ministry and others in due time please let me know.

Meanwhile, stay safe and remember 'it is good to talk'. This means that you should never feel that you have no one there for you to reach out to. You can reach out to God in prayer and reach out to me as your minister anytime - night or day. I'm only a phone call away. I would also be happy to visit you and chat through the window, or over the garden fence or whatever may be allowed over the coming days, weeks and months. Your brother in Christ, *Terry*