

March message for website

We are pleased to note that the good rate at which people are receiving the vaccination is helping to cut the rate of infections and reducing the risk of hospitalisation for those who've received it. This is very good news and gives us increased hope for an exit from lockdown. This month the Scottish Government's attention is taken up with the safe return of children to schooling. Indications are that it will be into April before "Stay at Home" restrictions are eased and worship can resume – accordingly, we will not be able to open the Church in the near future.

We are currently in the period of Lent in which we look at the start of Jesus' ministry after his baptism, follow him into the wilderness as he undergoes temptation, follow him through his ministry of teaching and healing and then finish with the final days of his ministry before his Crucifixion. It is a period where we can travel with Jesus through these important times in his life. They cover the essentials of his life and ministry and our study of them can strengthen our faith.

On the reverse side of the Ruthwell Cross there is a scene of two early Egyptian hermit saints, Paul and Anthony, meeting in the desert to break bread. Hermits usually lived in isolated places so that they would be spared normal human contact which would prevent them from serving God fully as they sought to. Even so, they still needed contact with others – when they wanted to celebrate the breaking of bread – which required someone else to be there with them.

In our present situation we often feel that we are in the wilderness. We are cut off from our normal contact with relatives, friends and neighbours. We are cut off from communal meeting – especially worship in the Church in front of the Cross. We may not be in the depths of a desert – but we are still isolated from each other and feeling that as a deep want. We have access to telephone and electronic ways of having some contact – which helps – but does not fully satisfy us.

As a Kirk Session we are still maintaining contacts within the parish. The elders are there to help in their districts and our Locum, Rev Gerald Moule is continuing his pastoral work by telephone. If you wish to contact him, his number is 01683 220667 and his email is: gmoule@hotmail.co.uk.

The website has contact details for Fiona Sloan and myself if you cannot contact anyone else.

That need which brought Paul and Anthony together in the desert was for communion with each other and with God which comes from breaking bread together. Our Communion services are among the highlights of our year after Christmas and Easter. As we approach Easter we have the wonderful record by the Gospel writers of Jesus celebrating the Passover Feast with his disciples on the night before he was crucified. It was his Last Supper – but it has become for us the central celebration of our communion with him, with God and with each other. This is the crowning celebration of our Faith and our Fellowship. We look forward to sharing it soon again in the Church in front of the Cross. You can read of this in Luke 21:7-20 as well as the other Gospels.

May we be aware of the communion and fellowship we already have and let us look forward to being able to share it in person later in the year.

Stay safe,

God bless,

Bill Holland

(Interim Moderator)