

*ALLANDER EVANGELICAL CHURCH*

*FELLOWSHIP NEWS-SHEET*

*31st MARCH, 2020*

**Hello**

Welcome to this first attempt to keep everyone in touch at this time when meeting together is not possible, nor likely to be for some time to come. It is intended as a means of encouragement and to provide a focus for us at this time when we ask: What is God saying through what is happening and how should we respond. As Christians, we have a sure Hope and seek to reflect that in our behaviour and witness.

**Truth for Troubled Times**

Inspiration comes through the ministry of God’s Word. The last two Sundays’ ministry in recorded form have highlighted that hope. On Sunday 19 March the sermon on Psalm 46 reminded us of a powerful assurance of an almighty God who is both a refuge and a strength and is ever present so that we need not fear. It also leads us into a divine perspective and an instruction to see these crises as theatres where the works of the Lord – his victorious redemptive work - can be seen.

**Strength for our Struggles**

Yesterday’s sermon, continuing the series on John’s Gospel, highlighted some powerful truths. Being loved by God – which we undoubtedly are – does not mean we are exempt from life’s difficulties. We all need to pray and trust. And, delay on God’s part does not mean rejection for it is often in these uncertainties that we come to learn to trust even when we don’t understand what is happening. Yet, even though we don’t understand what he is doing, he is still worthy of our commitment.

**Casualties**

While there have been casualties from the lockdown with our regular activities, such as our services, Toddlers, hashtag, Ladies’’ Meeting and special events such as Rejuvenate, Getting to Know Your Bible, the Holiday Club and even the Ladies’ Outing to Largs being cancelled for the foreseeable future there are also many encouragements.

**Fresh Opportunities**

One of those is the enterprise shown by many churches in making use of technology to continue ministry and fellowship. Our own Sunday sermons are posted on the website. Milngavie United Free Church are able to stream a full Sunday morning service on <https://youtu.be/R3_YbqSiExQ>, while other churches use Zoom conferencing facilities, etc to great effect.

**Total Lockdown?**

In these days of almost days of total lockdown it is good to know that,

“one Gate is open,

one Ear will hear my prayer.”

**Virtual Prayer Meeting**

Of special interest for us is a streamed Prayer meeting on Tuesdays at 8 pm from Llanelli Free Evangelical Church (who meet in what used to be the Synagogue in the town) led by Phil Swann on <https://www.youtube.com/user/llanellichurch/live> or through their website at [www.lfec.org](http://www.lfec.org) They also stream at 10.30am and 6.00pm on Sundays.

**Love One Another**

Another encouraging feature has been the evident concern shown towards each other. Clearly, phones are buzzing, text messages flying and other social media means being utilised as one cares for another. There is real and abundant evidence of this happening among us and is much appreciated as we continue to practise Christian concern one for another in these strange days. It is so much appreciated and is such a welcome extension to the fellowship and concern that has been normally shown when we could meet together.

**Pray for Us**

While most of us are in or around the ‘vulnerable’ category some of our number have special needs which we prayerfully remember in these days. Apart from the names which used to appear regularly on the Bulletin, remember those who have added responsibility caring for loved ones who need extra help, coping with health challenges, looking after children (or grandchildren) with schools and nurseries closed, With the shutdown jobs and facilities are at a premium and at risk, regular doctors’ appointments not possible etc. Along with them are those who are ‘front-line’ and needing to work and serve long hours, people like NHS staff, public services, carers, essential services personnel, not to mention ‘those who have the authority over us’ as they have to take critical decisions which have far-reaching implications.

**Missions and Missionaries**

And we remember our missionaries. We have just come to the end of a month supporting the Slavic Gospel Association (itself a new growth from the post-war crisis in Europe) and will remember Platform 67 in April.

Thinking of our missionaries do pray for Inga McKendry in Mexico and David and Jennifer McColl with Samaritan’s Purse in Bolivia.

**Finally**

In these days of isolation, we are thankful for the technology that affords us opportunity to communicate when we are unable to gather. Whilst it is an inadequate substitution for face to face conversation, it is helpful for us to stay in touch and to continue in the Biblical imperative of encouraging one another all the more as the day approaches. However I am conscious that communication, like everything else in our lives has become rushed as we live in the world of WhatsApp and Instant Messaging. As I look at the books on my shelf I am struck by how many are “The Letters of ……..” various great ministers of the past and I wonder will there ever be a book, “The emails of ……”!! Communication when rushed often lacks clarity as the writer is in a hurry to write his message and the receiver is receiving it in the midst of many other voices and tasks. I have often thought that in a world where we have so many means of communication, meaningful communication is rare. As life has been forcibly slowed down maybe it’s time for us to slow down too and in the quiet to think of the wonderful communications we have from God in the Scriptures. This is a great opportunity to become more familiar with the Word of GOD and to let His Word address our fears and encourage us. Every word of God is carefully and thoughtfully given. Now we have time to listen and learn. May our Eternal Father continue to sustain you in these challenging days.

Pastor John Macleod.