

The Church of Scotland

Maxton and Mertoun linked with Newtown linked with St Boswells

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October 2020

Dear friends

Greetings from the Manse. As you know our Kirk Sessions made the decision that our buildings would once again be open for Worship at the beginning of September, and we are extremely thankful for the hard work of those who made ready each of our buildings. It was decided that Maxton Kirk could not be opened as the numbers able to attend due to the restrictions were very low, but Mertoun Kirk was opened and Shaun and Anne spent many hours in preparation in order that as a congregation we could worship in fellowship together. In Newtown our regular wonder woman has been ensuring that the Church has been cleaned regularly and along with Sandy and Winnie, all the steps taken to ensure that worship happened were brought to fruition, and of course in St Boswells, the preparations had to happen a little quicker in order that the funeral of one of our much loved elders Mr Alec Harper could take place in the Church, but some very able folk, Sandra and John, Lucy and Colin, as well as Tracy who had continued to ensure the Church was kept clean prepared the Church Sanctuary for funerals and for Worship.

I cannot put into words how it felt to be able to be with you physically in our Churches once again, and to welcome Tim who will be with us from September to Easter on placement in our Charge. Tim is a candidate for full time ministry and has conducted worship in our Charge over the years. His placement is limited to 10 hours a week, which includes worship and supervision, but we are blessed to have him with us for this time and play our part in his training for his future ministry. And of course Helen on the piano and organ leading us with her music as we worship, however strangely as there is no singing permitted and in St Boswells no cushions on the pews either.

Our regular organists for Maxton – Mrs Elvira Denoon and for Newtown Mr Derek Reid, have decided to retire from playing the organ, Elvira has been the organist at Maxton for over 40 years I am told, which is a long time, Derek was the regular organist in Newtown when I first came, then he went off to France for a few years and came back just when we were in need again. Derek is the choir master of the Newtown Community Choir and continues in that role. We thank both of them for their service to our Churches, and wish them well.

As the season changes from Summer to Autumn and we settle into this new way of worship, it still feels strange that many of the little things that we took I think for granted are the things we miss most. It is a struggle for many of us, and the longer the restrictions are in place, you may now be feeling more disconnected with the fellowship you once were very much part of. My home Church talks about the Church Family – we here are

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also part of that family, the Church family as individual and unique as any family and we have our ups and downs, but we are called to love one another as we are loved by God, through his sacrifice in the death and resurrection of his Son, our Saviour for our sins. Paul in his letter to the Colossians in chapter 3 says that as 'God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved', we are to 'clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience'. The writer of 1 John speaks about being children of God, in chapter 3 saying: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are." So as children of God, part of a family that is huge, when we are feeling disconnected, we should be turning to these pages, to give us comfort, to reassure us that we are not alone, that as part of the Family of God, and like the hymn (Bind us together Lord) that I am sure you all know says in its last verse: You are the family of God, you are the promise divine, you are God's chosen desire", meaning that we are as members of the Churches, bound and part of a family that has ties and that through faith, through love, through praying for one another and upholding one another, are ties that cannot be broken.

However changes happen for many reasons, and we are in the midst of changes, some we can do something about and are in control of, others we have to accept, and it is with sadness I let you know that Douglas Scott our Maxton & Mertoun Session Clerk has stepped down and resigned from the Kirk Session, and our Depute Session Clerk in St Boswells, Mary Sargent has stepped down from her role too which included being the Administrative Property Convenor, but will remain on the Kirk Session. We give thanks to them both for all the duties they carried out for our Churches and Charge.

As we continue to work within the limitations of the restrictions, I and our Kirk Sessions will do all we can to keep you informed with changes. These are difficult times, and there are many who are feeling fragile at this time.

In October our Services at 10.30am will be as follows there will be a Harvest theme to the services with an added extra on the 4th and 18th as detailed. Because we are unable to have flowers or donations of foodstuffs this year we are appealing for you to put a cash donation in an envelope marked HARVEST to hand in at a service in October, which will then be forwarded to the local foodbanks. This is also the time we begin to think about The Blythswood Shoe Box Appeal, leaflets are on their way and will be available at Churches during October then filled boxes can be brought to or dropped off at Newtown Church for our service on the 25th October.

Sunday 4th October - Newtown Church: Sacrament of Holy Communion

Sunday 11th October - Mertoun Kirk

Sunday 18th October - St Boswells Church: Profession of Faith

Sunday 25th October - Newtown Church: Blythswood Shoe Boxes

Harvest this year will be different of course, for this year. I am not going to be doing my swap with Rev Jim Reid and going off to Kinghorn to worship there with his congregation. There are two reasons for this, the first is of course due to the restrictions, but the second is that Jim is having hip replacement surgery in October, so will not be in a position to swap. I am sure you will miss him along with his wife Marion and son Andrew

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as they have been very much a yearly fixture in our worship from the beginning of my ministry, and you will join with me in prayers and thoughts as he recovers from his surgery and full health.

It is hoped that an update on the progress of the Union of our linked charge will be available soon. The restrictions have meant that we have not been in a position to move any quicker. The next step is dependent on the outcome of a virtual meeting of The General Assembly this month which would give Presbytery the authority to carry this forward for a congregational vote, thank you for your patience and understanding in this. The Union of our Charge is part of the Presbytery Plan, and our Kirk Sessions have been actively involved in the planned adjustments.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to email or phone me or your elder.

The numbers permitted in Church are in compliance with the guidelines, but we will continue to upload a recording of the service to the Charge website as well as recording for the on demand phone line which is: 01896 404491.

To reserve a seat for worship please contact by phone the following people from the Church where the service is being held on the Friday from 6.00pm on the weekend of the service giving your name and telephone number. A list of attendees is kept for 'Trace and Protect' which is compulsory:

St Boswells: Mrs Lucy Smith: 01835 822425

Newtown: Mrs Winnie Milligan: 01835 823457

Mertoun: Mrs Anne Campbell: 01835 822174

Please take care of yourselves and your loved ones, remembering your Church Family in your prayers too as life in its ups and downs continues. Peace and love, kindness and grace, blessings for today and every day.

Shalom

Sheila