

The Manse
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Dear Friends

This has been a hard winter for everyone with another lockdown. The church building is closed again for everything except funerals. We have no indication of when the building might open again, but we continue our weekly services of worship on Zoom at 10.00am on a Sunday. This is made possible thanks to an amazing team of people, who generously offer their musical, creative and technical gifts so generously. If you have not tried it yet, why not join us some Sunday? You can join on-line or by telephone and we will talk you through the technology – please e-mail or telephone me for the link/phone number. If it would help we can arrange a practice run through of a Zoom meeting.

As I write this we are approaching the beginning of Lent and this year during Lent we will be reading a book by Gordon Giles “At Home in Lent” in which the author takes everyday objects from around the home and uses them to help us explore the Christian faith. The book is available to buy on-line ISBN 9780857465894 and there is a kindle edition for those who prefer. There will be a weekly discussion group on Zoom on a Wednesday at 4.00pm to which all are welcome. If you would like the link for this please contact me.

We continue to be involved with the local care for the community project in Tarves. As time has gone on this project has become more focussed on supporting families whom we know are struggling. Thanks to all those who continue to contribute so generously to this work and to the local shops for continuing to act as collection points.

As many of you will be aware changes of a radical nature are taking place in the Church of Scotland at present and this is reflected locally in the work of Gordon Presbytery, of which we are a part. Over the next 5 years many ministers will retire and fewer have been entering ministry to replace them. As a result, consultation has been carried out with local Kirk Sessions to try and find new ways of ensuring that despite this reduction in ministers, local worshipping and witnessing communities can continue, and indeed, grow.

Last month Gordon Presbytery produced a draft plan which envisages teams of ministers covering groupings of congregations and parishes throughout Presbytery. The proposed grouping for our area is Barthol Chapel, Tarves, Methlick and Udney Pitmedden, which would be covered by a team of two full time Ministers of Word and Sacrament and a locally employed Youth Worker. This grouping makes sense in that we have all been working together for some time on the Formartine Youth Project.

This plan will be further considered and voted on by Presbytery at their March meeting. If it is passed it will obviously involve a radically different way of thinking

and working for everyone and the full implications will no doubt only become apparent in time. But I do believe that this way forward could open up new possibilities for worship and witness in our local area. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with me, or your elder, and we will do our best to answer them.

In the meantime we look forward to working more closely with our neighbours in Methlick and Udney and Pitmedden in the future. We are currently planning a series of United Holy Week Services, details of which you can find elsewhere on the website.

Once again, thank you all for your continued support throughout this difficult and challenging time.

Warmest wishes

Alison I Swindells

Parish Minister