

# Autumn Message From Menstrie Parish Church of Scotland



*“How long, O Lord? How long?”*

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## Letter from the Interim Moderator:

*“How long, O Lord? How long?” These words – or at least the sentiments they express – will be words we all will have spoken or thought over these last few months. In March, when we first entered lockdown, most of us probably thought it would be just for a few weeks, certainly for no more than a couple of months. There was a spirit of good humour, defiance, of “let’s grin and bear it”. Rainbows were put up in people’s windows, folk came out at 8pm on a Thursday evening to clap for the NHS. We embraced Zoom, online worship, the wearing of masks, queuing at the supermarket. We bore it with good humour and good neighbourliness.*

*Nearly 7 months down the line, things do feel very different. The novelty – if indeed there was a novelty – has well and truly worn off for folk. Many have been hit physically, with the symptoms of COVID-19, many have lost their lives, many have lost loved ones – and many more have been hit mentally and financially. We are still asking that same question “How long, O Lord?”, but I suspect now with no realistic expectations of when we may find out the answer.*

*David frequently asked this question of God in the Psalms. And sometimes he gave us the answer as well. In Psalm 40 – one of my personal favourites – David tells us “I waited patiently for the Lord. He inclined to me and He heard my cry”. David knew that his cries were always heard – and our cries, our prayers, are no less heard today. there is ample evidence that many more folk have turned to prayer, and to the word of God, than usually turn up at a church on a regular Sunday. Many ministers – myself included – report an increased attendance at online worship. Indeed just last week I conducted the funeral of a lady who had become one of our most faithful and indeed regular online worshippers at St Mark’s and who, sadly, died suddenly before she could become a member of our face to face congregation as well. Many folk have found strength and support in prayer, in the scriptures, in the fellowship of a worshipping community – even if only virtually.*

*But of course 'virtual church' only extends so far. There are those who, for reasons of affordability, age or location, are unable to access online services. And ultimately there is no substitute for gathered, face to face worship – even if it is behind masks! So we are looking forward to the date when we can re-commence physical worship at Menstrie. There are many in our communities who need the church, and the services offered by our buildings, congregations and groups, 7 days a week. Foodbanks, playgroups, Bible study groups, children's activities – these have all suffered and are much needed. Full details about the re-opening of Menstrie Parish Church are detailed on the next page.*

*God doesn't always answer us directly. We may ask a direct questions such as "How long, O Lord?" – but we should know not always to receive a direct answer. But what God always does give us – in times of certainty and uncertainty – is Himself, his love, and his son, Jesus Christ. I pray that He will sustain and support you, and all whom you know and love, during these uncertain times, and during the months ahead.*

*God bless*

*Barry*

**Note from the Treasurer:**

Once the Church is open, Offering Plates will be available for collections. These can be used either on entry or exit from the Church. Alternatively, if anyone wishes to have envelopes collected from home please phone Jim McAlpine on 01259 763004 to arrange an uplift. Clearly as with most Churches the pandemic restrictions have had a big impact on our finances especially with the cancellation of almost all normal fund-raising events. An expected balanced budget has turned into one with a significant deficit of several thousand pounds.

Your kindness and generosity will be very much appreciated.

Jim

## Preparing for Welcome to Church

### RETURN to CHURCH

We are planning to re-open the Church  
On SUNDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER at 11.00 a.m.

Our Interim Moderator, Rev. Barry Hughes,  
and Kirk Session look forward  
to welcoming you back to Sunday Service.

To comply with Church of Scotland guidelines and  
Scottish Government restrictions we have had to put  
in place new arrangements for coming into Church.

**The maximum number allowed is 50 inclusive  
of Minister and on-duty members.**

- **Face Coverings** must be worn at all times.
- **Seating** is only permitted in **designated spaces**.
- **Social distancing** must always be observed.
- Your name and phone number will be **registered on entry** in the vestibule where hand sanitiser is provided in dispensers. Privacy Notice re data collection will be available for uplift.
- You will be **shown to a seat by an on-duty Elder**.
- Seating allocation will be **from the front** of the Church working towards the back to ensure social distancing.
- **Offering Plates** will be provided for personal use on **entry or exit** at the back of the Church.
- **Exit will start from the back** of the Church with clear instructions announced.
- **Toilets** will be open with new disposable towels.
- **Please be advised not to gather in groups** outside the Church before or after each service.

**WELCOME BACK**