



## ALLANDER EVANGELICAL CHURCH

### FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

20<sup>th</sup> July, 2020

#### **Back to Normal (John 2: 13 – 25)**

With the easing of restrictions we are today gathering once again in church after seventeen weeks of lockdown. But what does it mean to be going 'back to normal'? Whatever it is, it should not be a return to a complacent, 'comfortable', mode but one governed by a positive response to what God has been saying to us during this period of 'captivity'.

Taking John's account of Jesus cleansing the Temple and throwing out the money changers (one of two occasions when that happened: one early on and the other towards the end of His ministry) provides a challenging insight into what it could mean.

The 'normal' he encountered was a thriving market in the very place that was to be known as a House of Prayer, a place where the Passover was to be celebrated, and a solemn approach to, and encounter with, a Holy God was to be experienced. Yet, through initiatives, understandable at first but later tarnished with corrupted motives, it had become 'a den of thieves'. Convenience and profit had taken over.

No wonder that Jesus was righteously incensed and strongly dismantled the wrong practice so that intended 'normal service' – that which God intends – could resume.

As we come out of lockdown we need to look to God, get rid of all distractions, and work towards a vibrant Christianity that is marked by a zeal for the House of God, a passion for mission-focused prayer and a commitment to genuine worship. More on these next week.

#### **Church Services**

It was good to be back in church again yesterday after the decision by the Scottish Government to allow churches to hold communal meetings with appropriate safeguards. The Church was opened for a service at 10 30 with a repeat at 6 30 at night – a pattern that will be followed for the foreseeable future, with attendance being regulated and safeguarding protocols in place. No singing, but we were able to silently 'join in' video recordings of hymns that helped a sense of worship and anticipation. Seated at 2m distances, and somewhat regimented, socialising was not easy. But the powerful ministry was the same and challenging – well worth listening to again on the recording on the website. Make sure to 'book your place' for next week!

#### **Virtual Keswick**

With the 3-week Convention programme cancelled, Keswick Ministries are offering a Virtual Keswick from 27 -31 July. Details on the website: [www.keswickministries.org](http://www.keswickministries.org)

#### **Gems from Isaiah**

*Last week Betty McKay wrote about her experience reading through Isaiah again and re-discovering some well-known verses. She continues this week:*

There are so many passages well worth reading again. I've listed a few first lines of some of them to jog your memory and whet your appetite.

Comfort ye my people, saith the Lord. (40: 1);  
Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard?  
(40: 28); Fear not for I am with thee. Be not

dismayed for I am thy God. (41: 10); A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. (42: 3); Sing a new song to the Lord, and praise his name to the ends of the earth. (42: 15); Fear not for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name. (43: 1)

### Virtual Songs of Praise

To compensate for singing not being allowed in our church gatherings, it has been decided to hold a virtual "Songs of Praise" evening at 7 30 pm on Friday 24 July via Zoom. The Meeting ID is: 871 3689 2983, the Password: 070890 and the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87136892983?pwd=M0tSVTFrdUh0bll3NFBqNmVCVDJkdz09>

It would be great if as many as possible would join us. Danny will be leading the worship and some people will be introducing a hymn with an explanation as to why that hymn means something to them.

### Prayer

Keep remembering each other in prayer

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### Finally

A number of weeks ago an enquiry came to the Church website from Australia: it was a distant relative wanting to contact me. All he had was a photograph of me with his grandfather and my parents taken when I was about fourteen. The reason for the contact was sparked by his unearthing the Baird Family Bible during a Lockdown clear out, he was keen for it to return to Scotland. In due course, it arrived. Dating from 1866, it was rather the worse for wear and had clearly been neglected and stored in damp conditions. I was very pleased to get it as it filled in part of my family history.

Our Bibles are vastly more important to us than a mere family record: they are a record of our place in God's family. We are reminded in Ezekiel Ch18 that we cannot rely on our earthly family for our salvation; we gain no righteousness from them. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God---that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 1 Cor. Ch1 v10.

### SAT -7

As a Church we have become interested and involved in the work of Sat-7 who operate in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa). We continue to receive wonderful testimonies from the organisation, such as from Yasmin a mother from Iran,

*"Every time I feel weak and lonely, I call you, and every time that you pray for me, I am strengthened. You are the only joy I have right now... thank you for helping those of us who do not have access to any church or other believers."*

Please continue to remember in your prayers this organisation and the people they are reaching in the MENA, and give thanks to God for what he is doing.

*Render your hearts: not your garments (Joel 2: 13)*