



macduff
parish church

Gift Day and Coronavirus Update September 2020

Greetings from the Minister, Elders and Office Bearers of our parish church. We are all too aware how deeply Coronavirus has affected our church family over these past months and that we will, together, have more to face in the days and weeks ahead. Please be assured of our prayers and our availability if we can help in any way. This brief update gives details of our 2020 Gift day and other news.

ANNUAL GIFT DAY **Saturday 10th October**

Many charities have been affected financially because of Covid-19 and the Church has been one of these. In practical terms, church buildings being closed for a period (although MPC is now open for worship) has meant that offerings have taken a severe hit. We are so grateful to those who give regularly by bank standing order, PayPal or other means. While income has reduced our outgoings have remained, and in fact because of additional cleaning and disinfecting regulations costs have risen.

This year's annual Gift Day gives each of us an opportunity to not only help cover current costs but to ensure and resource the future mission of our congregation.

With this update you will receive a Gift Day envelope. If you feel able to give to the church on this special day, please bring it to our Market Street church hall **between 10am and 12 noon**. Please remember to wear a mask. We are unable this year to provide a cup of tea as we would normally do but trust that you will understand this in the current circumstances. Our appreciation of your gift is no less heartfelt. *Thank you!*



If you are part of our MPC church family we can keep you up to date more easily if we have your email address. Please send your name and email address to:

contactus@macduffparishchurch.org.uk

ACTIVITIES - What is definitely on:

Sunday worship at 11.00am. Currently restricted to 49 worshippers in church. The service is also recorded and available to watch online anytime after late Sunday afternoon (links on our church website and Facebook page).

Wednesday Zoom Coffee & Chat: Our great new get-together in an informal atmosphere. Join us from the comfort of your own chair – bring a tea or coffee and a bun if you like! Every Wednesday from 7.30pm on Zoom. Links to join the meeting are available in the *Members Area* of our website. Members of our church family should already have the password to access the members' area but if not you can request it by using the 'contactus' email address.

Wednesday audio Bible study: A short pre-recorded online study with music.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

A number of our other groups for children, teens and adults hope to start later in the year. Please check-out our church website and Facebook page regularly for the latest updates and news. Regretfully, it will still be some time before we can restart our Tuesday Coffee Corner. We know this is missed by many and we will continue to review the situation in response to Scottish Government and Church of Scotland guidance.



Guild Update: As you can appreciate with the current situation, it is not possible for the Guild to start this year. We feel that we will not be able to think about starting until the new year. We will still be in a position to accept smartie tubes to support Ekwendeni and these can be handed to any team member. The work of the Guild is still ongoing through our supported projects: *One Journey, One Route, The Extra Mile* and can be supported at any time. We will update on the church's Facebook page if there are any changes in the near future. Hoping that you are all well and look forward to meeting up with you in the not too distant future.

In fact the Guild will meet on **Zoom on 7th October** when we will have a speaker. Visit the church Facebook page for details soon. All welcome!

Listen-out for Hugh and other local ministers and pastors on Deveron FM as they lead worship on the first Sunday of each month and a thought for the week every Tuesday morning.

Gabriel's Music Project: Is there a baby or toddler in your family? Then this will delight them! Exploring the Bible through music - Tuesdays 10 am on YouTube. Founded & led by Caroline Sharp. Details and links on our church Facebook page.

Visit our church website:

www.macduffparishchurch.org.uk



Keep up to date through our Facebook page
@MacduffParishChurch

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From the Manse:

Everyone thinks they have read Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* but most of us haven't. Perhaps we've seen the film or perhaps that television series decades ago in black & white with its catchy theme tune (Google it!).

Daniel Defoe was a Christian and a journalist by trade. One day he read the true account of Alexander Selkirk, a sailor from Lower Largo in Fife who was abandoned on a deserted island in the South Pacific, and inspired by this he invented *Robinson Crusoe*. As the novel begins, we meet Robinson Crusoe, 18 years old and headstrong, rejecting his godly father's pleas and leaving home like an impulsive prodigal son bound for the far country. While at sea, blown along by a raging storm, his ship is wrecked. Crusoe, the sole survivor, washes ashore on a Caribbean island more dead than alive. As his strength returns he salvages food, clothes, tools and three bibles from the wrecked ship. Putting the bibles aside he begins building a shelter, gathering food and crafting the necessities of life. His thoughts are drawn to God only when he contracts a deadly fever and in dire distress, expecting to die, he retrieves one of the bibles and it falls open at Psalm 50 verse 15, "Call me in the day of trouble; I will deliver and you will honour me". That verse from the psalms makes a deep impression on him and he writes, "I did what I never had done in all my life, I knelt down and prayed to God to fulfil the promise to me, that if I call upon Him in the day of trouble he will deliver me". Another verse which Defoe inserts as impacting on Crusoe is Acts 5:31, "God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins". Crusoe repents of his waywardness and his relationship with the God in the novel builds over the months. However, when walking along the beach one day he sees a footprint in the sand his faith again is severely dented as he feared for his life.

As the novel unfolds Crusoe repents of his lack of faith and his belief returns. He eventually learns a great lesson for faltering Christians - that the things we fear most can, in the providence of God, be most used for our good.

The novel *Robinson Crusoe* has been criticised for its apparent acceptance of western colonialism and imperialism, and in these times when we are more sensitive about our nation's part in the former slave trade such criticism may be warranted, however, it was after all published in 1719 and reflects the tenor of its time. We can, though, relate to Robinson Crusoe in a number of ways: his prodigal ways; his self-caused disasters; his repentance; his disappointments, his struggles with loneliness and anxiety. Behind the presenting tale, *Robinson Crusoe* is the story of one person's conversion to Jesus Christ, his struggles to grow in grace and his subsequent passion to tell others about his Lord.

Today, as we grapple with the pandemic and its related consequences for our daily lives, we will experience many of the anxieties and feelings of Robinson Crusoe. We are not abandoned on a lonely island but we have come through deep social isolation and while there have been improvements, we have also had to deal with the disappointment of renewed and on-going restrictions. As Crusoe, we have also had to come to terms with the anxieties and frailty of life. I wonder if, like him, we are drawn to acknowledge more fully God's presence and, with Crusoe, use this experience as an opportunity to re-evaluate our priorities and to turn in repentance and faith to Jesus Christ. He will not abandon us. As we read in Isaiah 43:2, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you...".

May you know God's presence and peace whatever your situation.

Your friend and minister,
Hugh

