

The Church of Scotland

Maxton and Mertoun linked with Newtown linked with St Boswells

Scottish Charities No: SC013481, SC000575, SC010210

August 2020

Dear friends

I hope and pray that this letter finds you in good health since I last wrote in June. In our charge there have been a number of deaths of folks who are known and loved by many, and we give thanks for their lives and offer our thoughts and prayers for the families of those who have died. At this time of course as we know from the news, we are still in quite a fragile place and as businesses open up we are reminded of this. For those of you who have only just begun to know what life out with your door step is like, it is a daunting reality, although a shopping trip today is different from just a few weeks ago where there were one way systems and long queues to get into shops. Although I have to say that in some places those queues are still happening as shops limit the number of customers they have inside, and of course the majority of people are wearing face masks. I think the lockdown has given us a time to reflect on a lot of things about life, work, and our faith, as we have had time – the passage in the Old Testament that is often used as funerals comes to mind in which there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven, and there has been many who have spoken about this time being a season in which they have used the time actively and creatively. In God's time he created us all in his image and created everything around us, which for so long has been taken for granted – we just take for granted that the seasons and everything in them happens. But what I certainly felt and saw during this time was that nature and all that God has given us has flourished because of the restrictions on travel etc. The air we breathe felt cleaner – as an asthmatic this has been a great time, though my hay fever has been terrible as the flowers and plants have produced more pollen – for me anyway! As I walked around my part of the Borders with Rosie my dog, everything was so quiet, the birds however were noisy, but it was wonderful, and it made me think of Genesis, and the Garden of Eden, where everything was so perfect, life was harmonious for all that had been created, then human beings changed it.

Change is happening all around us, and as we begin to open our Church buildings for worship and fellowship there are changes in how this will happen. The Joint Kirk Session have decided that our Churches will once again open from Sunday 6th September but with a phased return to worship, with one Service at 10.30am each week as follows:

Sunday 6th September – St Boswells Church
Sunday 13th September – Newtown Church
Sunday 20th September – Mertoun Kirk
Sunday 27th September – St Boswells Church

Rev Sheila Moir, The Manse7 Strae Brigs, St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0DH
Telephone: 01835 822255 email: SMoir@churchofscotland.org.uk
www.4kirksonthetweed.org

Although the Current the maximum number permitted in a church building, with appropriate distancing, is 50. None of our Church buildings can accommodate this number. St Boswells and Newtown can accommodate around 20, Mertoun slightly more and Maxton the numbers are less, plus myself and organist, depending on whether people come as individuals or couples. 2 of these people will be office bearers on duty.

Coming to church will be a very different experience...

You will be encouraged to reserve a seat for worship by phoning 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 will be drawn up to use as the register of attendance on the Sunday. This will be our record 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

In adherence to the most up to date guidelines, when you attend a Church Service, you must wear a face covering at all times. 2 metre distancing must be observed both outside and inside the Church. This means you may have to queue outside so come prepared! You will be entering the church through the main entrance. You will be able to leave your offering here too as we are unable to use our offering bags or plates. You will be required to use the hand sanitiser as you come in and as you leave.

Inside the church there will be designated seating. This must be adhered to. The church will be filled from the front to the back. 'No go areas' will be identified in each of the Churches.

There will be no pew cushions, the toilets will not be in use, no hymn books or Bibles, no intimation sheets.

At the end of the service you will leave the Church in St Boswells and Newtown from the back to front. In Mertoun the arrangement will be slightly different as it will be possible for those at the front to leave via the doors at the side of the communion table. Again, however you will be asked to use hand sanitiser.

At the Service

And of course singing is not permitted. I know this will leave many people disappointed, but the guidelines at present are being extremely strict, and it would not be in our interests to not follow them. There will be music as we gathers and leave and at some point during the service. To start with the service will last for 30 minutes maximum with the same content as the online service but with the addition of music.

Keeping people safe

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The Kirk Sessions appreciate that many people want back to church however we have a duty to keep you our members safe. Those who fall into the more vulnerable categories because of age or health are encouraged to stay at home and to continue to use the online or telephone services.

Keeping in touch

It would be very helpful for us if, where possible, our Session Clerks could use email to send Church information to you e.g. this sort of letter. If you would be happy for this to happen, please send an email to your own Session Clerk as follows:

Maxton & Mertoun: Douglas Scott: dandpscott@btinternet.com

Newtown: Winnie Milligan: winnieandsandym@gmail.com

St Boswells: Lucy Smith: lucyasmith49@gmail.com

Online Reflections

During lockdown I have been recording a vocal online service of Sunday Reflections which our web master has been super at putting on our church website as well as the written reflections, and an activity sheet for young people where appropriate material has been available. On our Facebook Page, there is a daily prayer or word of encouragement from the Church of Scotland and Reflections from Sanctuary First, which from time to time also has included daily reflections from our Moderators of the General Assembly. And for those not online you can listen to the Sunday reflection by phoning 01896 404491 anytime during the following week.

Our website: www.4kirksonthetweed.org

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/TheParishChurchesofMaxton&MertounwithNewtownwithStBoswells> (Please like and share to follow!)

Offerings: And a final word about our offerings. Although we are unable to gather together the work of the church goes on in different ways. As has already been intimated through a letter in June by the Session Clerks at Newtown and St Boswells and the treasurer at Maxton & Mertoun, our offerings are needed for the upkeep of our buildings and we are so grateful for those who have been doing this either by putting cash through doors, sending a cheque or by setting up a standing order, thank you.

Shalom

Sheila

The following assessment tool is used in the Church of Scotland Guidelines on Re-opening Church Buildings.

‘It helps you to see how different risk factors may combine to give serious health complications should you catch the COVID-19 virus. It does not include the factors that may make you clinically extremely vulnerable, where you should be following the guidance for those who are shielding. It includes the factors where there is significant statistical evidence but does not include any rarer conditions which you may have, so this only offers a starting point. You may want to discuss the results with your doctor or with those who have expectations about your involvement with church life.

We are not claiming medical expertise in sharing this way of scoring your risk but giving a way to show how serious catching the virus may be for you or the groups using your church building(s). Circle the score next to each one that applies to you and add up your score.

Objective risk stratification (ORS) tool for individuals not already identified as “vulnerable” by the NHS Digital Shielded Patient List

| Risk factor | Indicator | Adjustment |
|----------------------------|--|------------|
| Age | >50 | 1 |
| | >60 | 2 |
| | >70 | 4 |
| | >80 | 6 |
| Sex at Birth | Female | 0 |
| | Male | 1 |
| Ethnicity | Caucasian | 0 |
| | Black African descent | 2 |
| | Indian Asian descent | 1 |
| | Filipino descent | 1 |
| | Other (including Mixed race) | 1 |
| Diabetes and Obesity | (Type 1 or Type 2) uncomplicated* | 1 |
| | (Type 1 or Type 2) complicated* | 2 |
| | BMI ≥ 35kg/m ² | 1 |
| Cardiovascular disease | Angina, previous MI, stroke or cardiac intervention | 1 |
| | Heart failure | 2 |
| Pulmonary disease | Asthma | 1 |
| | Non-Asthma chronic pulmonary disease | 2 |
| | Either above requiring oral corticosteroids in previous year | 1 |
| Malignant neoplasm | Active malignancy | 3 |
| | Malignancy in remission | 1 |
| Rheumatological conditions | Active treated conditions | 2 |
| Immunosuppressant therapy | Any indication | 2 |
| Interpretation | Score | |
| Low Risk | <3 | |
| Medium Risk | 3-5 | |
| High Risk | ≥6 | |