



**SCOTTISH CHURCHES  
DISABILITY GROUP  
NEWSLETTER  
July 2020**

**Message from David Nicholson DCS, SCDG Chairman**

To all my friends in the Scottish Churches Disability Group.

For me life has been much too quiet, as it probably has been for most of us.

I attended Wishaw General on Monday 15 June and was delighted to be told that the x-ray results were good. New bone is forming and progress is good. Oliver Bailey, my Consultant, spent 15 minutes with me. He has a good relationship with patients and is willing to spend time rather than rushing off to the next person.

I have been reading the story of Jacob's wish to re-establish new relations with his brother, Esau. We read in Genesis 32: 22 of Jacob's wrestling match with an unknown man, but he realises he is wrestling with God and seeks God's blessing. Jacob is anxious about how he will be received by Esau, from whom he stole his birth-right. I wonder what Jacob's thoughts were as he prepared to meet his brother. What changes might take place? How would he be received?

I have been aware of friends I should have kept contact with during what we now regard as normal times, but I just never got round to it. Now, I have been able to do this and we have promised to meet up as soon as lockdown restrictions allow.

Big changes lie ahead. I took part in my first Presbytery meeting by Zoom. For many of us meeting by Zoom is a new experience. I'm glad to say I got through the meeting with few difficulties. When eventually lockdown is lifted, things will be very different. Many changes will happen and we may have to embrace them or perhaps find difficulty in becoming accustomed to them. I pray God's blessing will be upon every one of you in this changing time.

With good wishes from David.

**Keeping in touch**

It has always been important for church members to feel that they really belong within their church family. With no physical contact at worship services or group meetings during the lock down, keeping in touch with those members who cannot be reached through video-conferencing and social media has been a challenge for churches. Two SCDG members tell us how their churches have coped during this unusual time.



Sandra McCallum of St Meddan's Church tells us what is happening in Troon:

Like many churches, we responded to the lockdown by finding creative ways to use the internet to find new ways of worshipping together, keep in touch and hold formal and informal meetings. For those who do not have access to the internet this has been trickier. We have found ways of staying in contact with everyone.

- At the start of the lock down every one received a letter from our locum minister, delivered either by post or hand, depending on the circumstances of the elders.
- Phone calls were made by the minister and elders, checking how parishioners were coping and identifying specific needs. Where people were self-isolating, these had follow-up phone calls from the minister.
- When the lock down started, worship went on line, using archive recordings of the church choir singing introits and anthems, and of congregational singing of the chosen hymns. The sermon and readings were recorded at home and emailed to our co-ordinator, who posted the finished sermon on the church website and on Youtube. We even managed a pulpit swap one week.

For those with internet access but less practised in using it, the church website was simplified, so that the on-line service could be found easily. For those without internet, a dedicated telephone line was set up, so that people could hear the church sermon. These measures do not specifically cater for those with hearing impairment, who in ordinary church services would use the loop system, although their home telephones may be set to amplify audio.

- Many have found the television worship programmes like Reflections at the Quay have become part of their Sunday routine.
- As the weeks went on, our Church magazine continued to appear, but only on-line.
- Some of the green fingered of the congregation, who had been preparing for a Garden Day, delivered plants to doors on their statutory daily walks.
- A Zoom chat was set up on Sundays so that those who would have been meeting after the service for coffee could still get together.

We are still looking at the document from the Church of Scotland regarding re-opening of Church buildings. It is too early to make any decisions; we are just at the planning stage. However, we intend to keep in touch with the other two churches in the town and work together if possible.



Alex Baird of Dalziel St Andrew's Parish Church reports from Motherwell:

Technology such as the internet, plus Zoom and conference calls, have been a great boost to help us all worship and keep in touch during the lock-down. What about those who have no access to internet? How do we keep in touch? Most, perhaps all, churches have tried very hard to maintain contact and provide support. Dalziel St Andrew's Parish Church in Motherwell has used the following ways of communication:

- Recording the worship service on DVD and delivering these to people who prefer this. Around 40 DVDs have gone out each week.
- Providing a telephone number where anyone can call and share in a recording of the service, either at the usual 11.00 a.m. Sunday worship time or at another time that suits them.
- Sending a weekly "What's On" page by e-mail to elders and other helpers who distribute to their districts.
- A team of volunteers, on a weekly or fortnightly basis, has telephoned all members who are 80 or older, to check they are OK.
- Arranging for "garden visits", where a call is made to have a chat (provided the weather suits!).
- As worship services have an option for streaming for the deaf and hard of hearing (including BSL and captions) a typed transcript of the service is produced for delivery to those who prefer this medium.
- Planning for re-opening. Already the church is open 3 times a week for private prayer to anyone who drops in. The downstairs area has been cleared of seats and only a limited number are placed around the sanctuary, observing safe distances and also all the advice regarding safety. Additional seats will be added, up to the number permitted, when the church is allowed to open for worship. The sanctuary and buildings are fully accessible with all welcome to drop in.

### **Joining the church under lock down**

Becoming a member of a church is always a special day in a person's life. Churches mark this in different ways, but it is usually an occasion when the whole church community comes together to express their welcome to the new member. During lock down, however, this is not possible. An SCDG member tells us how joining her church at this time was nevertheless a very significant occasion.

## Joining the church remotely By one of our members



I joined my church just after lockdown began. I was going to have joined on Easter Sunday, but I couldn't because the churches were closed. So I joined by special resolution. This consisted of my minister sending me vows which I agreed to. Then he asked the elders of my church to admit me and they did.

Usually when someone joins our church, they go to the front of the church during a Sunday morning service and take their vows. Then all the elders line up and shake their hand. It's quite formal. I was glad to join remotely because it let me take my time to think about the vows. I had already thought about them a few years previously, so they weren't new to me, but I liked being able to focus on them without any distractions.

Our church is always full on Easter Sunday and the atmosphere is joyful and intense. So I was relieved not to become a member of the church in that atmosphere, because I think I might have found it all a bit overwhelming. I've needed a lot of support to understand the church and the Bible. Some of that has come from my church, some from other sources including SCDG. I'm grateful to have been able to access the support I've needed. But it took me decades to find it. And even then, I only found it by chance.

I'm glad to have joined the church. I felt ready to take that step and so I'm glad that my minister and kirk session made it possible under lockdown. I found the vows daunting. But with God anything is possible. And being a member of my church gives me confidence and a feeling of strength. I hope that even once churches re-open they will let people join remotely. This could be more inclusive, because people won't have to come to the church on a Sunday morning, which they maybe can't do. It also lets people focus on the vows and not feel overwhelmed or distracted by the occasion.

### Telling your story

Everyone's experience of life is unique and everyone has a story worth telling. Now the Scottish Book Trust is making that opportunity more widely available through the Digital Storytellers in Residence project. At <http://digital-stories.scot/> you can read individuals' stories from Orkney in the north to Ayrshire in the south.

Disabled people are under-represented in these stories. If you would like to tell your own story or that of a lively, active group to which you belong, you can find advice on how to create a digital story on the website of Digital Storytelling in Falkirk: The People's Story Project at <https://librarylovefalkirk.com/2018/12/11/digital-storytelling-in-falkirk-the-peoples-story-project/>. Due to current circumstances,



Ian has developed a new section of the website called [Hymns Through Lockdown](http://scdg.org.uk/hymns-through-lockdown/), which includes some hymns with BSL and Makaton signing. You can see this at <http://scdg.org.uk/hymns-through-lockdown/>. There is a direct link to the hymns with signing at <http://scdg.org.uk/hymns-with-bsl-makaton-sign-language/>.

Ian explains the purpose of this resource:

“During this lockdown we have been unable to attend Church the Building, although we are still part of Church the People. We miss things we are used to, we miss giving praise to our Lord; we miss joining in with our worship through song. However, we can still see and sing along to hymns, from traditional to contemporary. This list was originally compiled for my own Church and sent out by email on a weekly basis. We can listen and join in, whenever we want our own worship, whenever we are feeling down or in need of a pick me up.”

Please tell your church and friends about these valuable resources and let them see how SCDG can support churches in their aim to be more inclusive.

## Poetry Corner

Claire Wilson has been inspired to write a poem which captures how people have found strength to cope during lock down.

### Making the best of things

The neighbour's hedge provides a line.  
I notice as it bursts to flower  
And raise my mug; not time to whine

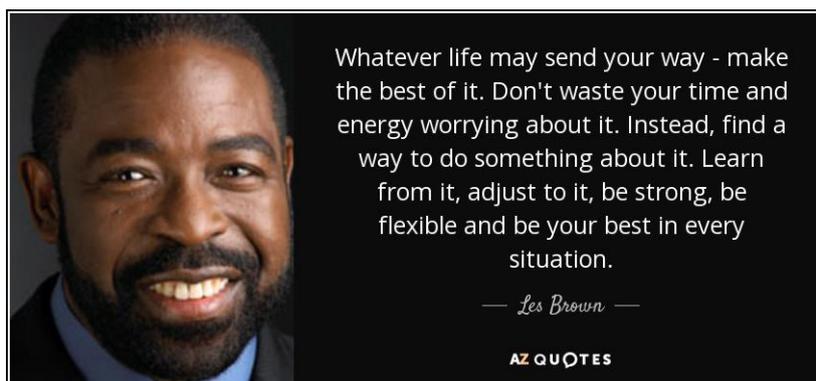
Or mope about our lack of flour.  
In every shop it's now as rare  
As yeast to raise our bread. We cower

Back as runners pass & hope no spray  
Will find its way behind our mask  
If one we wear or maybe pray.

What is the question? You may ask!  
When will our lives resume, unfold,  
Emerge to re-imagined task?

We're where we are; do as we're told.  
Hold fast the good, try not to pine;  
Recall the Potter's hand, remould.

Practice patience, let joy shine  
On, around our doorstep where  
The neighbour's hedge provides a line.



## Worship the Lord and the Beauty of His Creation

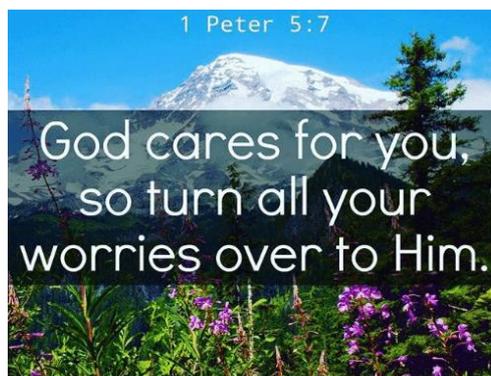
Anthony Kramers' splendid photo of Rackwick Bay on Hoy in the Orkney islands sits well alongside a Blessing from the Iona Community which reminds us that evidence of God's wonderful creation is all around us, inspiring us to give Him endless praise.

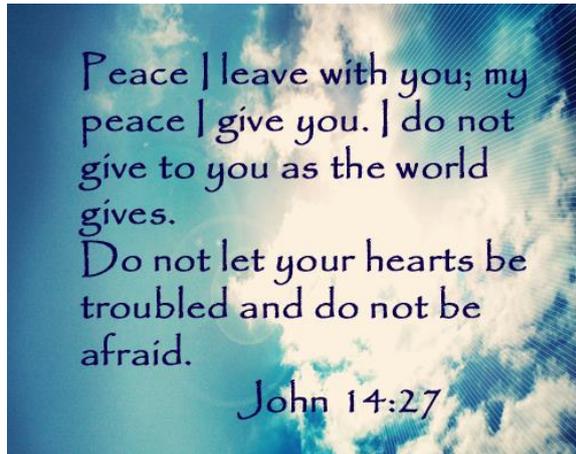


Bless all who worship you  
Bless all who worship you, O God,  
>From praise at dawn to sunset song;  
From your goodness, you enrich us.  
O, by your love, inspire us;  
O, by your Spirit, guide us.

By your power, you protect us,  
In your mercy, you receive us  
Now and always.  
Tune: 'All creatures of our God & king'  
Geistliche Kirchengesange, 1623  
arr. R Vaughan Williams

## Bible verses to treasure

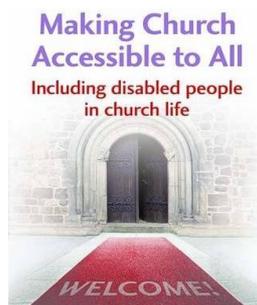




## How to contact SCDG

If you want to bring something to the Committee's attention, please contact the Secretary, Scott Gillies, at [secretary@scdg.org.uk](mailto:secretary@scdg.org.uk) .  
Tel.0131-669-3301 or 07584-139587.

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