



# FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER



Incorporating St. Mary's Church and St. John Ogilvie's Church

## THE GREAT SEASON OF LENT

**T**he Season of Lent is God's gift to us, helping us on the journey to new life and the celebration of Easter. This year, we will not be able to begin that process with a public celebration of Eucharist and the distribution of Ashes. However, the Bishops Conference of Scotland has produced, on-line, a format for celebrating Ash Wednesday at home, which includes a version of the Stations of the Cross. This can be viewed or downloaded from the Bishops Conference website, [bcos.org.uk](https://bcos.org.uk).

In our own parishes, we hope to continue to livestream the celebration of Eucharist throughout Lent, and the aim is to have a Children's Mass each Thursday in Lent. The boys and girls will present the readings, and we will use the Eucharistic Prayer for Children, and a children's address as part of the Mass.

As well as this, we hope to have an on-line Penance Service, just as we did during the Season of Advent. Even if the Churches are partially re-opened again towards the end of Lent, the Service will be broadcast on-line so that as many people as possible can take part.

Similarly, we will continue the initiative that began in Advent and have a daily reflection on-line from a member of the parish, or from the pupils at St Mark's and St John Ogilvie's Primary Schools. The idea behind this practice is to encourage us to take our own spirituality more seriously as we engage with the invitation to, "repent and believe the good news".

It's still not clear when the present restrictions will be lifted, therefore I can't say for sure if we will be able to have a congregation in church for the celebration of the Paschal Triduum. We await the appropriate guidance from the authorities, but even if there is a slight easing of the current situation, it seems unlikely that we would be able to accommodate more than 20 at Mass in the short term.

Having said that, I sincerely hope that the Season of Lent will be a time of blessing for each one of us. I would encourage you to cooperate with God's purpose, which brings healing and hope to all of us, and to be open to God's desire to build a better future despite the pandemic.

## POPE FRANCIS' RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

Pope Francis' recent publication, 'Let Us Dream', (*the path to a better future*), is a response to the global pandemic. The second chapter of this document is entitled "Choosing" and I would like to share some extracts from what Francis is saying.

Pope Francis observes, "Coronavirus has accelerated a change of era that was already under way. By change of era I mean not just that this is a time of change, but that the categories and assumptions that we used before to navigate our world are no longer effective. Things we never imagined would take place – the environmental collapse, a global pandemic, the return to populism – we are now living through, and what we once considered normal will increasingly no longer be. It is an illusion to think that we can go back to where we were".

He then advocates that we be a people of discernment; "Discernment allows us to navigate changing contexts and specific situations as we seek the truth. Discernment means to think through our decisions and actions, not just by rational calculation but by listening for His Spirit, recognising in prayer God's motives, invitations and will. There is a principal worth remembering in these times: ideas are debated but reality is

discerned".

The Holy Father continues, "the disruption of Covid has turned the tables, inviting us to stop, alter our routines and priorities, and to ask: what if the economic, the social, and the ecological challenges we face are really different faces of the same crisis? What if they have a common solution? Could it be that replacing the objective of growth with that of new ways of relating will allow for a different kind of economy, one that meets the needs of all within the means of our planet"?

"Discernment allows us to ask: What is the Spirit telling us? What is the grace on offer here, if we can only embrace it; and what are the obstacles and temptations? What humanizes, what dehumanizes? Where is the good news hidden within the sombre news, where is the bad spirit dressed as an angel of light? These are questions for those who humbly search and listen, who are willing not just to grasp at answers but to reflect and pray".

"Discerning what is and what is not of God, we begin to see where and how to act. When we find where God's mercy is waiting to overflow, we can open the gates, and work with all people of goodwill to bring about the necessary changes".

## VISION FOR 2021

I recently came across the latest edition of the magazine produced by the Columban Missionaries in the UK, entitled, 'Vocation for Justice'. It is packed full of really helpful information relating to justice and peace. The magazine is available for an annual subscription of £15, (4 copies per annum) via [columbans.co.uk](https://columbans.co.uk) and I would strongly recommend it to those who are serious about building a better future from a faith perspective.

The magazine got me thinking about what we should be aiming for in 2021. First of all, it would be good if we could be serious about making things better through healing and hope. Anything that brings people into contact with the presence of God is a source of healing hope – we find hope by simply being in God's presence. As people of faith, it is important that we are aware of the importance of bringing God's loving presence to all the people we meet.

Secondly, later this year the COP26 Conference will take place in Glasgow, when world leaders will congregate to discuss the future of our planet and specifically the importance of environmental issues. Why don't we all start to engage more consciously with environmental issues now, in preparation for this momentous event, but also, and especially, in response to God's invitation to be stewards of creation.

Thirdly, the Gospel of justice and peace is being proclaimed through numerous heroic initiatives ranging from the work of foodbanks to the activities supported by community hubs. However, there is a need to critique the systems that produced the crisis in modern society. That means asking difficult questions about issues as diverse as the care of the elderly and tax justice. If we are serious about making things better, then we need to be serious about the importance of the relationship that exists between peace and justice.

God's love can make a positive difference in peoples' lives today but, there's a price to be paid for being compassionate, empathetic, caring and kind. Jesus never shied away from paying the price to make things better for people in need. In 2021 we would do well to commit to following his example.

## COMPUTERS

Last month, we drew your attention to the fact that The Irvine Localities Communities Team had received a number of digital tablets and laptops together with 'Mi-Fi' internet connections, from 'Connecting Scotland', for distribution to people who are at risk of isolation because of the Covid crisis through being "digitally disadvantaged", and who meet specific criteria. Support will be provided to recipients of the devices on a one-to-one basis via phone and/or in person (in a venue where social distancing may be maintained – legislation permitting).

By way of a reminder, it is worth going over the conditions by which the equipment is available: "The devices are intended to benefit people who are **all of the following**:  
**1) Digitally excluded** – do not have an appropriate device and/or are not connected to the internet.  
**2) On low incomes** - so cannot afford to buy a device or pay for internet access.  
**3) At risk of isolation due to coronavirus** – because they are in the extremely high vulnerability group (shielding), or the higher risk of severe illness group, including people aged 70 or over".  
If you are aware of anyone who meets these criteria and whom you think would benefit from receiving a device, together with the support to help them learn how to use it, please get in touch.



## ADDITIONAL ITEMS

The sections highlighting "useful websites", "useful contacts", and "helpful pathways", have been retained and augmented by one new contact; the 'Recovery College'. Perhaps these will prove to be more important than ever in these dark days of winter. If you have any suggestions about content that you would like to see, or might find helpful, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

## USEFUL WEBSITES FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

*Sacredspece.ie*  
*https://pray-as-you-go.org*  
*https://prayingeachday.org.uk*  
*universalis.com*  
*alonetogether.org.uk*  
*hallow.com*



## HELPFUL PATHWAYS

There are also other useful websites and contact details for more pressing needs, all of which are confidential:



*Breathing Space* – for anxiety, low mood and stress

[breathingspace.scot](https://breathingspace.scot)

*Stop It Now* – for adolescents concerned about their own thoughts or feelings, or about another adult or young person

[stopitnow.org.uk](https://stopitnow.org.uk)

*Clear Your Head* – for help keeping in touch with others and managing moods and anxieties

[clearyourhead.scot](https://clearyourhead.scot)

*Together in Mind* -provides good on-line resources to support mental health and wellbeing

[togetherinmind.nhs.uk](https://togetherinmind.nhs.uk)

*Recovery College* - provides a range of educational courses and resources to people who might be struggling with mental health issues.

[recoverycollegeonline.co.uk](https://recoverycollegeonline.co.uk)

## TELEPHONE HELPLINES

Samaritans	116123
Children 1 <sup>st</sup> Parentline	0800 028 2233
Domestic Abuse Scotland	0800 027 1234
Victim Support Helpline	0800 160 1985
Scottish Women's Aid	0132 226 6606
Rape Crisis Helpline	08088 010302
Abused Men In Scotland	0808 800 0024
NSPCC	0800 1111
Stop It Now Scotland	0131 556 3535
Alcoholics Anonymous	0800 9177 650
Narcotics Anonymous	0300 999 1212
Gamblers Anonymous	0370 050 8881
Alzheimer Scotland	0808 808 3000



## CAN YOU HELP US?

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