



Diocese of Brechin: News Bulletin

Weeks of 21st and 28th December 2020

Christmas Greetings from Bishop Andrew

Christmas 2020 is a very, very different celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. The celebrations in our homes and our churches will feel limited as the pandemic (and the latest restrictions) prevent us from gathering together with family and friends as we would wish. It has been an extraordinary year ever since the 'hard lockdown' back in March: a year of pain and grief and loss. But it has also been a year of acts of kindness and support. It has been a year of technical creativity as 'Zoom' and 'Facebook' become the place where churches can worship and families can connect.



The Crib Scene at All Saints' Glencarse, Christmas 2019

And this Christmas, even if churches are planning on suspending worship with the 'level 4' restrictions, is the same time of celebration. The message of God's love and grace, wrapped into the birth of a vulnerable baby, 2,000 years ago, is even more important in a world wracked by pandemic and fear. The light of that love and grace can bring hope into the darkest of situations: that is what the teaching of Jesus leads us to, the re-ordering of the world to put the weak and lost into the heart of our care. There is hope for the world: not just of a vaccine that will make life safer for all humanity, but of God's eternal message of grace that goes beyond this world promising salvation for all time!

Please keep safe and well this Christmas as you join in spirit with all those you love. And may I wish you every blessing for a brighter and better 2021.

Covid Update for Scottish Episcopal Church: 'level 4' from Boxing Day



Coronavirus guidelines

On Saturday it was announced that, as of Boxing Day, all of Scotland (other than outlying islands) will go into level 4 of the pandemic restrictions for three weeks. This is due to a new strain of the virus (mainly being found in England) that seems much more infectious. Family plans for Christmas have been affected by the limiting on travel and Christmas 'bubbles': it is hard and painful to have a sudden change to travel and family celebrations.

Our church worship after Christmas will also be affected by the change to 'level 4' from 26th December. This limits church numbers to 20 and people cannot cross a local authority boundary to attend church.

Many churches have reacted to this news already. Some are suspending 'in-person' worship and returning to live-streamed or virtual gatherings. Some, with smaller numbers, are continuing to gather under these new constraints.

The decision to suspend (and provide alternatives) or to continue is a local decision and will be driven by the make up of the congregation, the local authority areas where they live, the usual numbers attending and, importantly, the view on the risks associated with travelling and gathering as the pandemic continues. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and the clergy and vestry will make a judgement, with the bishop's guidance as required, as to the best way forward for each community.

Whatever decision a church makes – as you move through the next few weeks please be gentle with yourselves and others and also please err on the side of caution as you make your decisions.

Celebrations from the Diocese of Swaziland

This lovely photo came from Swaziland last weekend. Many of you met Ncobile - also known to us as Cherry - when she spent 10 days in Brechin Diocese in 2016 with the Companionship young adults' group, on the Spirit of Discovery pilgrimage.



Ncobile Mavuso at Graduation

Cherry faced so many challenges trying to continue her education & it was wonderful to see her success at the University Valediction Ceremony last weekend. She has written a short account of her journey for us - please access it [here](#).

Holy Trinity, Monifieth congregation have supported Cherry in her studies and they feel privileged to have played a small part in supporting Cherry's university education. She plans now to work in palliative care and will I know make a wonderful health professional. We wish her every success in her future career. Our Companionship involvement does make a difference - by doing small things well.

Canon Pat Millar—Companion Links Officer

“Connecting Scotland” Programme

The SEC would like to draw to your attention information regarding the Connecting Scotland Programme which aims to assist those who are “digitally excluded” to get online.

The programme allows organisations to apply for certain categories of individual to be supplied with an iPad with mobile connectivity to enable them to access the internet. This may be of particular interest to congregations with elderly church members or those with disabilities who are not currently digitally connected or families with children on low incomes. The programme is administered via local authorities. As part of the programme, the organisation needs to be in a position to provide a "digital champion", who could be a volunteer, and who would receive training under the Government scheme (and who need not be an IT expert) to help individuals receiving their iPad to get connected and make use of it.

The closing date for the current round of applications is 18 January 2021. Information regarding the

programme is available at the following link which also gives details about the process for making applications: [Connecting Scotland](#)

Special Thank You from EASE - Training in end of life skills

Thank you so much to readers who have shown an interest in this training. The response has been excellent. The start date of the course in January and further details will be emailed to those who have applied, by Elaine Colville of Angus Health and Social Care Partnership. The list is now closed for this intake. Peter Smart, Lay Reader

Faith in Community Dundee— Food Provision and Money Advice

Faith in Community Dundee has provided an updated Food Provision list for the Christmas and New Years period.

They have also provided an updated Money Advice leaflet that includes information on opening times for advice services over the festive period.

Please follow the links to additional information.

[Food Provision](#) — [Christmas and New Year](#)

[Money Advice](#)

Scottish Episcopal Church Online worship in the Pandemic

The Scottish Episcopal Church continues to offer 'national' worship online which can support such congregations as well as their own, now well-established, online offerings. The provincial worship has a special programme for Christmas, including a Midnight Mass hosted by the cathedral in Dundee. Sunday services will also continue in the form of a Eucharist broadcast at 11am.

There are more details and downloads of previous weeks' services at:

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/broadcast-sunday-worship/>

News to share? Please send...

If you have any events, ideas with worship or anything else to report, please send copy to Elliott at office@brechin.anglican.org. The Bulletin will come out each week for the foreseeable future.

Wishing you a very Happy Christmas from the Diocesan Office!