

Diocese of Brechin: News Bulletin

14th December 2021



Coronavirus guidelines

Omicron: Changes to Household Rules: Churches Still Open with Restrictions

The First Minister has today (14/12) [announced](#) a tightening of Covid advice, especially for households meeting. Churches will remain open e.g. for Christmas worship but are being asked to avoid crowding and support distancing. The SEC Advisory Group issued a [release](#) and revised [FAQs](#) on Friday 10th Dec with no major change in detail but a strong message about taking extra care. Please watch out for further updates.

The UK and Scottish governments are urging all to have their **booster dose** of vaccine and to take extra care by focusing on the existing restrictions. Please take a **Lateral Flow Test** before you attend church, take care with wearing your face covering, hand hygiene, cleaning church buildings between services and activities and be very, very careful with busy social activities. Masks must be worn in church, and consider ventilation and keeping a degree of personal distancing, especially at busy events.

For Advent and Christmas, with so many extra services and activities, please carry out some **contingency planning**. If clergy, musicians, keyholders etc. require to test and self-isolate and/or if they test positive for Covid, please plan who can fill these self-isolation gaps. Communication plans in case activities have to be cancelled or moved online at short notice could also be produced.

It would be wise for **vestries to do local 'risk assessments'** and maybe consider moving very busy Christmas activities to online versions or to cancel mask-less refreshments following services.

The measures we currently operate under are designed to keep worship and other church activities safe in the presence of the virus: judgements must always be made about continuing the vital pastoral and spiritual life of our churches and restrictions to keep as safe as possible. Any more details on restrictions for churches will be shared as soon as they are available.

Companionship News:

A New Bishop for the Diocese of Swaziland

As reported last week: the Very Reverend Dr Dalcy Dlamini has been elected by the Bishops of the Anglican Province of Southern Africa to be the next Bishop of the Diocese of Swaziland, following Bishop Elinah's death earlier this year.



Bishop-elect Dalcy (Photo: Facebook)

The full press release is on the ACSA website:

<https://anglicanchurchsa.org/dr-dalcy-dlamini-elected-bishop-of-swaziland/>

Bishop Alan Scarfe of Iowa:

Diocese of Brechin Retirement Celebration

An online Zoom Evening Prayer was held on Sunday 12th December to give personal thanks for the many years of support that Bishop Alan has given to the Diocese of Brechin in our three-way companionship with Eswatini. Bishop Alan and Donna are shown on the Zoom call below, listening to a specially composed piece of bagpipe music, 'Brechin Farewell', with the music framed and presented. You can listen to the piece, composed by Catherine Black from Brechin Diocese, at this [link](#).



Bishop Alan and Donna at the Zoom farewell (Photo: Diocese of Iowa)

Companionship continued: Covid and political situation in eSwatini—help needed

The position in Eswatini remains very precarious, especially with the travel restrictions placed on Southern Africa due to the Omicron variant. There remains ongoing civil unrest and tension with pro-democracy protests being cracked down upon by government forces, resulting in many basic services and resources being unavailable to the ordinary population. The help that Brechin Diocese provides, especially in funding the Neighbourhood Care Point (NCP) scheme, is greatly valued in the Diocese of Swaziland, especially now that matters are so hard in the country.



Food delivery at an NCP

The latest report from eSwatini on the work of the NCPs is [presented here](#). The need remains great: if any churches are able to provide donations to support this work, please send them via the usual channels, or contact the [Diocesan Office](#) if you wish to know more details.

Brechin Diocesan Training Sessions: 'Pastoral Care' Training for lay members: January 2022

From Dean Fay. Following the successful Zoom training sessions held earlier this year, and as requested by some of those participants, the next training to be offered is three lay training workshop sessions on 'Pastoral Care'.

These will be held on Zoom on Sundays 16th, 23rd and 30th January 2022 at 2.30pm each day.

The titles for the 1hr 45min sessions are:

- Week 1 – The stories that form us
- Week 2 – The God who calls us
- Week 3 – The community that sustains us

They will be led on Zoom by the Rev Liz Crumlish, an associate of the Institute of Pastoral Supervision and Reflective Practice. We are very fortunate to get this input and I would be grateful if you could put these dates in your diary and as many people as possible would sign up for this.

If you could email flamont53@sky.com to register interest and Dean Fay will send you the ZOOM link for the sessions.

Christingle Planning? 'Shine a Light for Scotland' with Aberlour

Since April last year, Aberlour has supported some of the most disadvantaged children and families in communities across Scotland. We've awarded over £1.5million from our Urgent Assistance Fund in small cash grants to 5,090 families to buy basic necessities such as food, clothing and utilities.



With the end of furlough, the removal of the Universal Credit uplift and winter setting in, families already living in poverty are being left in desperate situations. We have already seen a further increase in the number of applications to our Urgent Assistance Fund, with numbers doubling from September to October.

This Advent, you can donate to our Christingle appeal (which includes a section to let us know which church you attend) and show children across Scotland that there is hope. Your support will help children and families suffering from the worst effects of poverty. Aberlour's family services will be able to provide practical and emotional support to those who are struggling.

With your continuing support, Aberlour will be there to help children for as long as it takes. Thank you.

Read more at: <https://www.aberlour.org.uk/christingle/>

Any news to share in the Bulletin?

Email the office on office@brechin.anglican.org