

May Letter for Holburn West Church

Things don't always go as we planned

Letter from the Minister of Holburn West Church

One of my favourite Laurel and Hardy films is when Stan and Ollie get ready to go out on a family picnic. About everything that could go wrong, does go wrong. The beautifully prepared sandwiches are turned over and scattered, the elderly relative's bandaged leg, is bumped into several times. After friendly goodbye waving to the neighbours, and the car is about to go, the tyre is burst and the wheel needs to be replaced. The initial smiles from the neighbours turn into exasperated frowns. It is farce, perfectly executed. The present lock down is not something any of us had planned for in advance. Undoubtedly, some things have caught us unawares.

Two personal examples. We hadn't anticipated the dog grooming services being closed. One of our dogs, Paddy, is a King Charles Spaniel. He is "high maintenance" compared with our other dog Zak, who is a cross between a Labrador and a spaniel. Paddy was needing a haircut. I did buy dog clippers some time ago, but I never had the courage to try them out, so I always took him to the dog groomers instead. My wife Carol decided that she would try them out, but she wanted to practise first. Who would be used for the trial? Yours truly, myself. Having practised on me, that gave Carol confidence to take on Paddy. It's maybe just as well that I'm not seeing you face to face, with my doggy haircut!

Another incident to recall is this. In order to try and keep myself reasonably fit and in shape (apart from walking the dogs as my daily exercise) I have been trying an online course on yoga. Perhaps, subconsciously, trying to impress my young and good looking yoga teacher (not that she could see me, it was on YouTube), I may have been over zealous in my efforts to do the exercises, which led to me twisting something in my lower back. Sitting has been uncomfortable, which is a bit of a nuisance, when, due to the lock in, a lot of what I do is sitting in front of the computer. So, I've had to ease off the yoga classes in the meantime.

Yes, things don't always happen as we had planned. This happens with God's people a lot, according to the Bible. Maybe I should qualify that. Things don't happen as they had planned, but we discover that they are living within a greater plan, God's plan. Joseph, sold by his brothers, later put in prison and then he becomes second in command to Pharaoh, Israel driven into Exile, Daniel in the Lions' Den, Jesus rejected, crucified, dead and buried. He is raised from the dead. The disciples imprisoned and released. Paul shipwrecked at Malta on his journey to Rome. And so, the list goes on.

Some of what we as a congregation at Holburn West, are experiencing, must feel like that. In late Autumn last year, the shock announcement that the Presbytery of Aberdeen Planning and Deployment Committee was considering the Holburn West building as one of a number to be closed within the City of Aberdeen. The Kirk Session meetings and consultation with the congregation, which followed that. The awareness that a number of difficult decisions have still to be made by the Presbytery of Aberdeen about the future shape and practice of the Church. Holburn West, has always impressed me as a friendly and welcoming Church Family. The congregation has been blessed with very able, gifted and imaginative individuals, willing to give of their time, talents and resources in service of Christ and His Church. As well as gathering for worship and growing in faith, fellowship

and praise, it has been a place of friendship, fun and laughter. During this present lock down, we have greatly missed those opportunities to meet in these ways. These changes were not in our plans. As God's people have had to in every generation do so we have to do. We have to adapt. It has been good to work with neighbouring colleagues in providing a regular shared online service given by the Aberdeen West End and City centre churches. And now we also have a regular Sunday evening worship service, being streamed live and then its recorded format, available on YouTube via the church web site. Each of us need to seek God's guidance for the steps we are to make. Colonel Tom is an inspiring example. With the constraints of being 99 years of age, he invited sponsors for his daily walk with a Zimmer, and as a result, over 30 million pounds has been donated to the NHS. Our individual steps, may be different; a phone call, an email, a letter, a Skype, Zoom, Facetime call, a gesture of kindness in the way we act toward others, a time of quiet, reflection and prayer, a time of spiritual nourishment through music, reading etc.

So, it is important we make the steps we can. We need to exercise an attitude of faith and trust in God. We need to act in the presence of God each day. We need to communicate with one another in a supportive and encouraging way. We need to prepare for the way forward as best as we can, in the circumstances. My hope and prayer is this, that with all the upheaval going on in Church and Society, we will capture a greater vision of God's greater plan for us now and in the years to come.

"The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face towards you
and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24 – 26)

from
Rev Duncan C. Eddie