

St Nicholas Parish Church, Prestwick

Thought for the Week

Sunday 5th July 2020

Little did I imagine that when I retired from St Columba Church in Ayr fifteen months ago that I was going to have so much spare time on my hands!

This year I was due to go off to the Passion Play in Oberammergau in Bavaria and later on, have a holiday with friends in Nice on the Cote d'Azur. I had eight weddings to conduct in venues from Portugal to Biggar, but all have been shelved for the time being.

We are now entering the fifteenth week of the enforced lockdown, and though restrictions are being eased here and there, we have all still be most vigilant as the Coronavirus is still prevalent in our communities. Like you, I have been very conscious of, and grateful to, that wonderful army on the front line who continue to keep us safe and well and provided for. My sister, Allison, has been nursing Covid patients in the RAH in Paisley, and I have been praying for her and all her colleagues.

By now, my wee house in Coylebank is so clean that even Hyacinth Bucket (or should I say Bouquet?) would approve. I have finally managed to sort through a couple of boxes of photographs. That pile of books that was waiting to be read has now become much smaller. Clothes that have shrunk in the wardrobe have been neatly folded and are now in bags waiting for the charity shops to reopen. I have become a regular stroller on Prestwick Prom most days, and as well as having avoided being run over by over zealous cyclists, have enjoyed sitting on that solitary bench in front of the car park at the foot of Grangemuir Road, where I have chatted to a whole host of fascinating passers-by, including some members of St Nicholas! And aren't we so blessed to live in such a lovely town, with that stunning panoramic view over the Firth and the hills of Arran, and those awesome, breath taking sunsets?

Small acts of kindness have brightened up many a day as I have opened my front door to a full Roast Lamb Sunday dinner; a superb hanging basket, bedecked in begonias, delicious home baking, and the occasional bottle of bottled fruit, of both the white and red variety!

Then on Sunday mornings, I have zoomed in on various acts of worship led by ministerial friends, and only last Sunday, I shared a "Family Fortunes" Quiz with family in Perth, Western Australia and Romsey in Hampshire! The Seniors won, by the way!

Yes, indeed, despite that frustrations and the handicaps that this pandemic has thrown at us, there is so much for which we can count our blessings and, as the old hymn says, "name them one by one."

We have all had to cope with a very tough and isolating time, and I certainly do not want to belittle the life and death crisis that we are still in. But I do believe that it has taught us much about where our priorities should lie.

And one of those priorities are the family and friends whom we have missed so much, the folk who sit beside us in the pew on a Sunday morning, the companions we meet on the golf course or the bowling green. It has been so difficult to have been forcibly separated from them.

There is a great word in the New Testament and that is the word “together”. In the Gospels, the disciples were TOGETHER when the Risen Christ appeared to them on that first Easter evening; it was in that same Upper Room that the friends of Jesus were gathered TOGETHER when the Holy Spirit came and emboldened them and the Church was born; St Paul often wrote in his letters about those who were TOGETHER with him in spreading the Gospel of God’s Love.

TOGETHER – how I have missed being together in Church with fellow believers. And I know that you are so anxious to return to that lovely red sandstone building on the Main Street which has graced this town for over a hundred years. There have been hard days in the past, and folk have kept the faith and prayed and continued to live out Christ’s love in the darkest times.

Let’s use this time to count our blessings, to continue to grow in Christlikeness and to pray for each other in the community of faith.

It is my earnest prayer that, no matter how long it takes, we will, as Her Majesty The Queen said so poignantly in her broadcast from Windsor Castle, “meet again”.

The Revd Fraser R Aitken, Locum.