

Inverness Presbytery
Prayer News

March and April
2021

Can you help?

How do you think that Prayer News could be better at helping you and your congregation to engage in prayer for yourselves and for other congregations?

Let Pauline Hunt, the prayer coordinator for the presbytery, know

inverness@churchofscotland.org.uk

We are getting excited! Lockdown may soon be ending and we hope that we can begin to get back to normal. But the question is, what will normal be like? Will we just slip back into the way everything was before?

It seems evident that normal will not be what it was. Perhaps for far longer than lockdown ends we will continue to be cautious at people getting too close to us and being in crowded situations.

We have also learned new techniques. A year ago we barely knew what Zoom was, but now many use it as easily as the telephone. Will we want to do without it now?

Economically, we may be struggling with having to face elevated prices and higher taxes. Online shopping is probably here to stay, at least in the short-term, and we will see many changes in the High Street.

What of the church? How long will it take us to change out of our pyjamas to get to church—and without eating our breakfast in the middle of the service and a cup of tea by our side?

More seriously, how many will there actually be who come back to church at all? Some have died in the year, others have become too infirm to come anymore, or have gone into care. Still others prefer not to come out but to join a video relay of the service—and perhaps at a time more convenient to

them. Still others have, during the year found another source of fellowship and meaningful worship and they will prefer that. Or perhaps they will prefer to continue to have the choice where they worship week by week.

Our sessions will need great wisdom to know how to manage the changed situations. They will need to have a strategy to encourage and welcome former friends and reach out to win new people to the fellowship. There will likely be almost commercial competition to get people to come.

One thing we know is that the old methods to attract people are doomed to failure—except one thing, and that is the faithful setting forth and living the gospel. Even this is unlikely to succeed at first because people generally do not want to know. Our Holy Spirit-changed lives will however become attractive in the midst of a people who are seeking meaning, peace and contentment, but who do not

know where to find it, or, indeed, they do not know what they are looking for. But they see us and that we have these things.

As we begin to reconnect from lockdown pray that we will be able to engage with our community, and commend Christ by our living faith.



'First time back since lockdown ended!'

Many have suffered hurt during the year of the pandemic. It is tragic that so many have died as a result of Covid-19, or have had underlying conditions that have affected them adversely as a result of the virus, or that the winter cold and snow have caused to bring about their end.

But there have been other causes of pain. Pain for those who can only stare in through the window at their loved ones within a care home—without holding their hand, giving a kiss and a hug, which their hearts are breaking to do. Or whose loved one have become lost to them as dementia has deepened and they are no longer remembered.

Still others have suffered mental scars through lockdown isolation and just the denial of the daily routines so familiar to them. Those shielding, who have not been out for the whole period of lockdown. Others who have lived in constant year-long fear that they will catch the virus.

There are those who fear the jag, who feel ostracised because of their apprehension. Perhaps fearful of needles or uncertain that the vaccine has been tested, or they have imbibed the scare stories.

Some has suffered, not directly from Covid, but because of cancelled operations. Who have now a disease far worse than it might be if they had been able to get to the doctor.

Pray for those who have been damaged in this terrible period of our lives. Pray that God would draw near—especially by us going to them. Pray for Christ to heal the anguish.

Give thanks for all those who have been so helpful during lockdown—medical staff, carers, (in care homes and at home), neighbours and friends who have shopped, baked and cooked.

Give thanks for those who have comforted, clothed and fed the homeless and those having a very hard time.

Give thanks for teachers and homeschooling parents and those who have cared for the young and have care for those for whom life at anytime is challenging.

Give thanks for ministers, interim moderators, deacons, readers, pulpit supply, and for all who have enabled so many to continue public worship, who have ministered God's word to us: for sessions and elders whom all have fed and cared for us spiritually.

Above all, give thanks to God himself, who has continued to love those who are in Christ Jesus, and who has provided and enabled others to serve, and whom above that has given his Son to suffer and die for us that we, through faith in him, have a bright and joyous future with him, our Bridegroom, for ever.

Inverness Presbytery's Prayer News wants to encourage congregations to pray for each other

Every member of every congregation should be a person of prayer—not just prayer for our own needs but praying for the needs of others.

Prayer is talking to God, as friends talk together, except God is able to do far more than we can think or imagine. If we are in Christ then we are the children of God in a unique way, and like an indulgent father, he welcomes our coming to him.

God is not looking for fine-sounding words, nor our formal prayers, but he wants us to cry out to him from our hearts—in our heart-language.

Not only do we each need the prayers of others as a cry on our behalf, it is good for our own spiritual well-being to recognise the needs of others and to give ourselves in prayer for them.