

Thoughts from the Manse Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020



It seems that we are in for a very tough winter as Covid 19 continues to disrupt our lives. I don't know about you, but I am very frustrated at the mixed messages being reported in the news bulletins and long for some sort of joined up thinking from those who govern. Jesus said that we should love one another, and on the face of it there have been some very

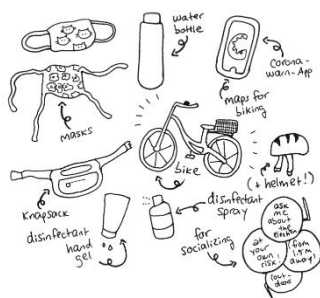
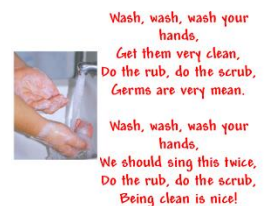
good examples of loving care within our communities, but the prevalent attitude of either not believing in the threat or believing yourself somehow immune from the worst of the virus is not loving your neighbour.

We probably all heard President Trump's exhortations to the American public not to fear the virus but as commentators said, that is easy to say when you have your own personal hospital and can command every available drug, but not so easy to do when hundreds in your community have already died from the virus. Maybe you also heard someone from Nottingham interviewed on the news who said we should abandon all precautions and let the virus take its course, but that is to resort to the history of the plague or Spanish Flu when precautions were unknown.

Young people, thousands of whom have returned to university recently seem more concerned that they are not getting the experience they are paying for rather than the risk they are running in partying as usual. Yet, now are we hearing that new clinics are being set up to deal with 'long Covid', the unexpected complications in young healthy people who only had minor symptoms and now find their lives seriously inhibited by breathlessness and extreme fatigue. We are still learning the true extent of Covid's reach.

When the Israelites were struggling to live in the wilderness, they were provided with a set of guidelines for living in community. It seems to me that we need a clearer set of guidelines to live together in Covid times. Many have commented on the clarity of guidelines in Scotland and having recently spent a week in Scotland people do seem to know what is expected of them even if they do not like it. What would be your five guidelines for living in community in Covid times? Maybe something like this:

1. We all have freewill but with it comes responsibility.
2. Life is important, do not allow the drive for success, money, or power to endanger life.
3. Seek to understand restrictions and why they are important. Do not rely on hearsay.
4. Respect one another and act to keep everyone safe, do not spread false rumours.
5. Follow the guidelines given and encourage others to do this, 'wash, wear and give a wide-berth when using spaces where others are present'.



ClairKine

Figure 1 Essentials for keeping safe

Of one thing I am sure, there is no going back to life as normal, pandemics and natural disasters change things and as we move beyond then we take forward the discoveries we have made about how to be. The term 'the new normal' has probably caused confusion, post-Covid may be a better term, for there will be a post-Covid and our prayers must be that as many people as possible have the opportunity to experience that life. To do that we need to follow the rules for the moment and love our neighbour in a generous self-giving way, the Jesus way.

