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Dear church family,

An Easter update from Duffus, Spynie & Hopeman Church

May the peace, love and hope of God be with us all.

We are not managing to create a full Easter church magazine but wanted to share some news and the church calendar for the next few months.

We are continuing to work more closely with our sisters and brothers in the Church of Scotland in Lossiemouth, with whom we'll unite in the next year or two. Office-bearers from across our congregations have been meeting regularly, exploring different aspects of mission together – recognising how much is already going on, all that we have in common, and our shared vision for the church in our local communities. It's also hugely encouraging for four of us to meet and plan as a ministry team: myself, Geoff McKee, Christine McWhirter and Anne-Marie Simpson.

In Holy Week this sees us sharing services in Hopeman and Lossiemouth – and please note that the clocks change on Easter Sunday this year. Throughout April, the joint Eco team is offering us all the chance to bring and swap gardening stuff after each Sunday service – seeds and plants, and also any pots or surplus equipment that might be of use to someone else.

A small steering group will be formed from the Kirk Sessions this month, to start discussing questions the union raises. Meantime, we are planning displays and activities to gather and share memories in each of Hopeman, Duffus and Spynie church buildings, with space to remember, celebrate and lament. Hopeman displays will be during Hopeman Gala Week, 12-20 July; Duffus in August; Spynie in September. If you are interested in helping, please get in touch – particularly for Hopeman, where we don't yet have a team to organise things.

An important calendar change to note is the shift in day for the Spynie social hub. From mid-April, the social hub will meet on a Wednesday instead of a Thursday.

That shift allows the toddler group and social hub to meet on the same day, making more efficient use of heating and electricity. Perhaps the new day is a chance for you to pop into the hub and enjoy the range of activities there. The social hub in Hopeman continues on Monday afternoons, now 1.30-3.30pm.

The church finances have taken quite a hit in recent months, particularly by the end of our previous fixed price electricity contract. We also haven't done much fundraising for quite a while. However, we are now facing a significant gap between our income and our expenditure every month – especially when we have added the social hubs and toddler group to our heating usage every week.

To raise funds for the social hubs we are holding a Daffodil Tea in Hopeman Kirk Hall on Saturday 20th April 2-4pm. Please come along – and keep an eye out for further fundraising events.

If you are able to offer other financial support for the congregation's work, please use the usual giving routes and/or contact Lesley McPherson lesley-mcp@hotmail.co.uk tel: 01343 830172.

On that note, we want to say an enormous thank you to Lesley, who is retiring as our treasurer after 14 years in the role. We are hugely grateful for all the work Lesley has done, in a complex and shifting context. We are also very thankful that Susan Scott has agreed to become our next treasurer, after a period of handover.

We are also looking for someone to take on the role of property convener for the Hopeman Kirk building. The congregation will continue to use both Hopeman and Spynie Kirk buildings as long as we own them (no sale or transfer is imminent), and they need looked after with care and respect. It would be a huge help to have someone keeping a close eye on Hopeman and getting maintenance work arranged as necessary. If you think you can help, please contact me to find out more.

One further piece of administrative stuff – if you are moving house or changing emails, please can you let Christine Smith, our roll keeper, know. You can contact Christine at salterhill@live.com 07599 040478

These are not the easiest times for the church, or for many people, locally and globally. But I believe God is with us – Jesus walked very difficult paths, as Holy Week reminds us, facing the very worst human beings can do, feeling abandonment and isolation. Therefore, nobody is living in war, hunger or fear on their own. God is in the mess and despair, sharing our sorrows as well as our joys.

Easter Sunday also offers hope of resurrection – new life coming beyond death and destruction. That doesn't take away the difficult and messy times, but it is a promise that the living loving God can transform us and our world. The community of God, known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, invites us to participate in that transformation into new life and love.

May we all find hope for peace and new life this season.

With love and prayers,

Jenny