



ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH – LISBON PRESBYTERY REPORT, OCTOBER 2020



presented a challenge to all of us in the Church of Scotland family. In the middle of March the Prime Minister, Antonio Costa, announced the country was to be in a State of Emergency with very strict guidelines to be followed. Due to the Portuguese Constitution such a decision had to be reviewed every 15 days. In fact, the State of Emergency was renewed twice which meant total lockdown for six weeks! Then followed a State of Contingency and the lesser State of Calamity. Due to increasing numbers of persons proving positive within the last month the country has returned to a State of Contingency.

So, Interim Moderator Rev. Norman Hutcheson managed to return home to Scotland in the nick of time in March. Then followed thoughts on what to do here in Lisbon?

Zooming became the norm for thousands and we started a weekly Virtual Fellowship together with a new WhatsApp group called Church Chat. Many members of the congregation were guided through the technical aspects of Zoom with private sessions.

Locum Minister Rev. Alex Douglas and his wife Jill were due in July and it was touch and go as to whether they would ever make it. However, the two of them joined in the Virtual Fellowship sessions. On 19th July 2020 face-to-face worship was renewed at St. Andrew's Church in Lisbon following the strict guidelines issued by the Director General of Health with 20+ souls in attendance. Rev. Alex and Jill left on October 1st and Rev. Norman Hutcheson arrived on October 3rd.

During his time in Lisbon, Rev. Douglas was very, very keen to reach out to as many folk as possible and willingly learned to record his Sermon by using the recorder option on his smart phone! This was then uploaded to the Kirk Session techie, Iris Holt, who posted it on the church website and Facebook. Audio Sermons proved popular with the congregation and the public at large. Voila! Then followed video which went on the church website/Facebook and YouTube.



Alex was proud to wear his Scottish mask which was a gift from the daughter of a member of our congregation when she visited her Mother.

Because of Covid-19 it was decided to purchase a screen and projector so that the Bible readings, first lines of hymns and heading of the Sermon could be shown with various appropriate photographs. This has proved to be most popular and will continue to be used for all future Services.

We are pleased that some members of our congregation are back worshipping with us and feel safe with the safety measures, although not all are yet attending because of fears for health or work restrictions. Each week we have had between 20 to 25 in attendance, including the dogs of our pianist, who lie by the piano and behave perfectly throughout the Service. As a favourite hymn says “All are welcome in this place”.



Dogs with a mission – Chloe and Rufus
Anne

The various groups who were using our downstairs hall have not been able to get together which of course has affected donations, but more members of our congregation are now making bank transfers and offerings received during our worship on Sundays has shown a steady increase since we re-opened the church.

We miss not being able to serve coffee and refreshments but those who wished to stay behind have been meeting in the garden wearing masks and keeping a safe distance from each other. Unfortunately, the weather has now changed so that may no longer be possible. This also affects the Bible study group who were also meeting in the garden before the service on Sunday mornings. On the 15th October the Prime Minister will be giving an update on the latest situation, after which we will be told whether the same rules apply or more restrictions need to be implemented because of the increase in numbers, mainly in Lisbon and the North.

Despite the fact, that upon return to Scotland there are quarantine restrictions, Rev. Alex Douglas followed by Rev. Norman Hutcheson made the decision to come to Lisbon to lead us in our worship. Their positive attitude and Ministry is a blessing and a tremendous support to get us through the difficulties we are all facing at this time of confusion and health worries.

Nina O'Donnell and Iris Holt