

THE FELLOWSHIP OF ST THOMAS

Letter from the President. February 24th 2021.

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Dear Friends,

The strange and unsettling times continue, but as I write this the First Minister has announced the basics of a gradual move out of Lockdown. I have to say, I was slightly disappointed that barbers and hairdressers are not likely to reopen until the end of April, by which time my hair will either be in a ponytail, or at the very least similar to what it looked like in the 1970s!

I imagine that many of you, like me, will have received your vaccination and we give thanks for the skill of scientists and the NHS in making this available to so many in a relatively short period of time. I am delighted that so many of my Facebook friends in Bangladesh are also receiving the vaccine. I was speaking to someone on a video link who told me that they just have to apply for a vaccine and it is administered free of charge by the government. From what I can gather, life is as near normal as it was before, with even the annual revival meetings around the various Dioceses taking place, although many people still appear to be wearing masks.

The Committee had another Zoom meeting earlier this month, the first since our Virtual Annual Gathering where about 16 people joined us for what turned out to be a very enjoyable morning. John Chalmers led us in a very meaningful reflection, and after the “essential business” we spent about an hour sharing news with one another.

This letter is to bring you important news about the Annual Gathering planned for **25th September 2021**. We are unclear as to what the situation will be by then, but we are making plans for the final meeting of FOST to be in Dunblane, in a format similar to what we were used to before the pandemic. We have invited Rev Sumit Harrison (known as Harrison) who is minister of Carnwath linked with Carstairs Church of Scotland. He was born in India and ordained in the Methodist Church there, before coming to Scotland where he was inducted to his charge in November 2020. Harrison has accepted the invitation to lead the Communion Service, and I have been asked to preach. Harrison is aware that a gathering in Dunblane is dependent on the situation nearer the time, and that we might have to resort to another Zoom meeting. We realise there might still be social distancing restrictions in both the church and the India Gate Restaurant which might make a meeting difficult. We will keep you up to date with the situation. However, the committee decided that whatever happens the Annual Gathering of 2021, will be our final meeting.

Can I also remind you of the request made in 2019 to share in writing some memories of your time overseas (no more than 500 words) and also any photos so that we can perhaps have them collated into a booklet after our final meeting in 2021. I have received the reflection of 5 members, but more are requested.

Remember to have a look at our website www.fost.org.uk for further updates and hopefully we will be able to be together in September in Dunblane.

God's blessing on you and your loved ones – and stay safe.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew

24th February 2021