



First Larne Presbyterian Church Bridge News

Worship God, Build His Kingdom, Share His Love



Sumo at the BB



Strong..... but humble



Christian Aid Week 2026

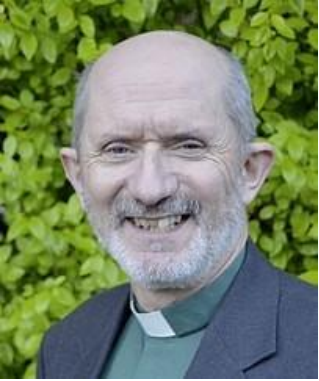
"We express our sincere gratitude for your commitment, sacrifice, and partnership in God's work. May the Almighty God richly bless you and reward you abundantly for your faithfulness."



Spring 2026 No. 427

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COLIN'S COLUMN

SLOW DOWN!

Assuming you are reading this in some privacy, let me ask a delicate question. Have you recently been acquainted with a speed camera?



In the full year up to the end of August 2025 the PSNI detected 4,400 speeding offences, whilst the NI Road Safety Partnership, using their detection vans, caught almost twenty times that amount – 86,134. There is a fair chance

that some readers of this edition of Bridge News are included in these stats (you know who you are!) and have consequently accepted an irresistible invitation to attend a speed awareness course in a stern attempt to encourage you to slow down?

However your affections are inclined towards the speed camera you may be nonplussed to learn that, contrary to popular belief, it was first designed to speed cars up rather than slow them down.



The first speed camera was realised in the work of Dutch engineer Maurice Gatsonides, shown at a rally in 1968. Rather than being a road-safety campaigner he was Europe's first professional rally driver. In 1953 he achieved his greatest rallying result by

winning the Monte Carlo Rally in a Ford Zephyr by just three seconds.

His invention of the speed camera was driven (!) by a desire to improve his speed around corners. The first "Gatsometer" consisted of two pressure-sensitive rubber strips stretched across the road. Driving over the first strip started a stop-watch; crossing the second stopped the timing device. He made the world's first reliable speed-measuring device even more accurate by incorporating a flash camera. Gatsonides could then determine how much extra

speed he could squeeze out of a corner by approaching it along a different line.

Over time he developed his camera to catch offending motorists. By 1971 a radar beam had replaced the rubber strips. Other devices have been produced but to this day in many jurisdictions speed cameras of whatever sort are *affectionately* known as "Gatsos".

Whether your calendar and diary are read in ink or pixels we all experience time moving ever faster – or so it seems. The advent of digital communications not only gets news to us instantaneously but also pressures us to make decisions and respond to requests, assertions and invitations instantaneously. Is there not frequently less space and time to ponder, to consider?

By the time you are reading this Lent may be coming towards its conclusion or already given way to Easter. However, if, like many of our fellow Presbyterians, you have not intentionally observed Lent this year let me suggest you consider it for next year – beginning on Wednesday 10th February 2027.

I am advocating the value of a private observance of Lent not for reasons of fitness and healthy living (although they are admirable goals). Rather, I am suggesting we need Lent, and some other observances in the Church's calendar, to slow us down so that grace can catch up with us.

This year we have offered "Do Lent Generously" - a programme not about giving things up but about giving God room! In our world of ceaseless distractions, noise and activity the message of Easter can be easily drowned out or passed by even by those with the best of intentions. Without the Easter message that Jesus came to live, die and rise to bring us forgiveness, healing and new life we are nothing. That message does not need improving – but it does need space!

Lent, long associated with the religious practices of penitence and confession, pulls us back to that space we need more than ever if we are to survive and thrive in our fast-paced world. These religious disciplines may seem rather antiquated and sombre to our modern sensibilities. However, we should not be turning them into ritualistic observances only attained by the pious! Penitence, requiring repentance, is simply an acknowledgement that we are not perfect, that we have gone wrong and that we need to change direction. That acknowledgement requires an honest confession, a clearing out of what is not good for us,



what is holding us back. That is why each year on the day before Lent begins, Pancake Tuesday, we symbolically gather up and clear out from the kitchen those rich foods, such as butter and eggs and other fatty foods, in preparation for the fasting season of Lent. This origin is reflected in our other

Lent may also be compared to some of those medical check ups and procedures we sometimes are subjected to. We don't always look forward to the discomfort, even some poking and prodding – but ultimately it can be life-giving!

If Easter is the main event Lent can be like the violinist, the pianist, the trumpeter putting in the practice, grinding through the scales and technique exercises and then producing the sublime performance. Or even, like the athlete in their training regime strengthening the weakness that keeps them back from their personal best.

When asked why he observed Lent the English evangelist, Canon J. John, offered the following:

Because Lent slows me down when life speeds up.

Because Lent tells the truth about sin and the greater truth about grace.

Because Lent reorders my loves.

And because Lent leads me, once again, to the empty tomb.

Lent is not about losing joy; it is about finding it more deeply.

This Lent and Easter take the opportunities provided to learn more about yourself and your God.

Celebrate who you are, who you are called to be and who He is.

After the fasting of Lent enjoy the feasting of Easter!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin D McClure". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Rev. Colin McClure

name for Pancake Tuesday - Shrove Tuesday – using a word derived from a twelfth century Old English word “to shrive”, which means to offer forgiveness, to free from guilt.

Whatever the popular conception may be, Lent is not a season for wallowing in shame, dressed in sack cloth and ashes. Rather, it is a time to move in the right direction, walking with renewed purpose and integrity in the light of God's forgiveness, mercy and purpose.

Lent should never be trivialised as a rather superficial form of spiritual dieting focusing on giving up – be that foods, drink, social media and the like. Lent is a spiritual opportunity, not so much about giving up what can be enjoyable and life-enhancing but about reordering and resetting our priorities to allow life to be lived better. In this process we have to be prepared to accept that, as a recent commentator noted, “by saying no to something we enjoy we are saying yes to something greater.” Realigning and reordering our lives, may give the space that allows us to rediscover what truly satisfies.

If someone asked you to describe Lent, how might you do it without resorting to religious jargon? Let me give a few ideas.

Lent is like a spring clean – needing some effort, some elbow grease, but leaving the home fresher, brighter, less cluttered and ready for the glorious days of summer.

Racial Justice Sunday

Sunday 8th February was Racial Justice Sunday. Our morning service was conducted as usual by Rev. McClure (including playing the piano for all the hymns), who then travelled to St Anne's Cathedral to take part in a similar service that afternoon, with dignitaries from the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland. This service was conducted in seven languages and recorded for broadcast on RTE on Palm Sunday.

Racial Justice Sunday was pioneered by the Methodist Church in Great Britain in 1995, as a response to the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence in London.

It is intended to recognise that all people are equal before God, no matter what their ethnic background, and that, in line with Biblical teaching, the stranger should be made welcome in our churches and in our society. In an article published on the Church of Ireland website, Most Rev. John McDowell, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, explains further.

"The love of God has many expressions in the life of the world and the life of the Church. In a world which is marked by chronic national, economic, cultural, class and racial divisions, the love of God is expressed through justice. The cry for justice, and lament at its absence, have been a central theme of the prophets from Amos in Eighth century BCE Israel down to Dr Martin Luther King. Yet the Church has an even greater vocation. Jesus Christ was the first person to conceive of the divided races as a unity. In clear contradiction and challenge to the accepted world view of radical inequality which marked the society in which he lived (and many societies before and since) he proclaimed the equality and the oneness of all human beings in Him.

As we are all too well aware Irish men and women have brought their gifts to add to the treasury of cultures and societies all over the world. Despite appearances to the contrary, Ireland itself is made up of an amalgam of incomers. Beginning with the original Neolithic peoples who wandered over the soon to be submerged land-bridges with Europe and what is now Great Britain, to the Celts from Central Europe, the Cambro-French, the English and Scots. To these have now been added a great diversity of people from Africa, Asia and parts of Europe who in turn are bringing their gifts to enrich our world and our Church and often to make it their home.

It is my hope and prayer that Racial Justice Sunday and this Service will be taken up and used in many parishes and perhaps that someday there will be no further need for it."



Very Rev. Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast Cathedral, Rev. Richard Kerr (PCI Moderator-Designate), Most Rev. John McDowell and Rev. McClure at St. Anne's.



Very Rev. Stephen Forde, Rev. Richard Kerr, Rev. Dr. Janet Unsworth, the President-Designate of the Methodist Church in Ireland, and Rev. McClure.

"Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt." Exodus Ch 23 v 9

Morning Service

On Sunday 15th February First Larne welcomed two special groups of visitors. The outside broadcast team for Radio Ulster "Morning Service" returned to our church. Producer, Alan Meban (a relative of our late elder Alex Meban) was accompanied by technical experts, Dr. Andrew Jackson and David Walker.

The Police Male Voice Choir, pictured below, were also our guests. These gentlemen provided two excellent pieces, "Calon Lan" a Welsh hymn, in English "A pure heart", and "Let there be peace on earth". First Larne meeting house has excellent acoustics and it was a pleasure to hear the church filled with such music.

Rev. McClure spoke on two men who showed great bravery, faith and Christian forgiveness. Firstly, Ananias the man given the frightening task of going to greet Saul (St. Paul) who was on his way to Damascus "breathing murderous threats" against Christians (Acts Ch. 9). Ananias did not know what had happened on the road to Damascus.

Secondly, the Very Rev. Professor Dr. Thomas McCurdy Barker (known as Tom), originally from Londonderry, who spent 40 years in missionary service. Later to become Moderator, he was a missionary in China in the 1930's. With a number of other missionaries, he was captured and held prisoner by the Japanese during the Second World War, and was in Nagasaki when the second atomic bomb was dropped. After the war ended, he offered his hand in friendship to the

Japanese commandant responsible for the awful treatment of the captives.

Congratulations to all First Larne members who took part, with a special mention for Rebecca Reid, who was commended by Mr Meban on her violin playing.

Thanks also to the ladies who provided the breakfast after the service. Several members of the Police choir commented on the quality of the sausage / bacon butties – Sunday lunch may have been delayed in some households.

The broadcast service is available on BBC Sounds.



The production team (L to R) Andrew Jackson, David Walker and Alan Meban, with Rev. McClure



Strong but struggling; humbled but finding peace.

At the end of January, the Men's Fellowship welcomed (L to R) Shem, Rab and Lewis, three very strong men, to our church. Rab is from Ballymoney and, at the



invitation of Rev. Ian McNie from Trinity Presbyterian Church, he started going to a gym run by Sammy Graham, who is better known as a mechanic for Joey Dunlop. In the 1970's and 80's Rab watched a TV show called the "World's Strongest Man".

Those of us old enough to remember the show will recall Olympic shot putter Geoff Capes taking part. Rab went on to meet a Christian competitor in these events called Glen Ross, more of which later.

Strongman events have different equipment to that used in the Olympic games weightlifting competitions. One of these is called the "Farmer's Walk", so called because it mimics carrying a heavy object in each hand and, in competition, the strongman has to lift it and walk a course with it. Legend has it that the heaviest Farmer's Walk was completed by a woman.... Claire and Jody showed that there may be some truth in the story.



That was with the small version. Then Lewis demonstrated the big one - note the bars on each end to add further weights Lewis also showed us the "walk"....up and down the Sport's Hall, carrying the two big weights, which led to some anxiety in the bowlers present, but all was well.



An even bigger lifting frame, is called the "Farmer's Yoke", which mimics carrying milk cans. It can just about be seen behind Shem in the picture opposite....enough to say it is the height and wider than a large man and very heavy! Next was the 40kg bag of sand. It's not so much the weight as the awkwardness of getting a grip of the bag which is difficult..

Then there was the "tree trunk"..... except that it is made of steel. Again, Lewis showed how it was done..... then Ben had a go!



As one wag observed "It's a good job your wife's a paramedic".

Shem specializes in Olympic training and our own Olympian, James, demonstrated exemplary technique with the conventional weights.



Some of our more senior members were also brave enough to give weightlifting a go.....



Of course there has to be a cautionary word ... All these lifts require the right technique and specialized equipment, even down to the shoes, so as the saying goes “Don’t try this at home”.

There was of course a serious side to the evening and each strong man gave testimony about their faith.

As mentioned above Rab had several Christians, including Rev. Ian McNie, Sammy Graham and Glen Ross, encouraging him on his journey, but it was only when he went through a marriage break up that he fell to his knees in prayer and found the help he needed. Inspired by the idea “Here I am, send me” Rab started speaking at events with Glen Ross.

Shem suffered physical abuse at the hands of his stepfather, who was a Jehovah’s Witness, to the extent that he ended up in hospital at the age of 10. Understandably he felt anger and bitterness against religion at that time.

He became an atheist and read a book “The God Delusion” by that famous atheist Richard Dawkins. Convinced, he even joined the Richard Dawkins Foundation and travelled with debating groups arguing the atheist case against Christians. He was proud that he never lost an argument. Until, he attended a debate between Christopher Hitchens, representing atheism, and John Lennox, originally from Armagh, a Cambridge graduate in mathematics who teaches at Oxford University. Shem was shocked when the audience of over 1000 people voted Lennox the winner of the debate.

He began to realize that there were holes in the atheist arguments and that the Dawkins Foundation were constantly changing to suit the occasion... so there was no truth in what they were saying. Shem started to question himself and struggled against his

old arguments. And he was still bitter and angry from his childhood experience.

Eventually he prayed. Not immediately, but after a week or so, all that anger left him and he found he was able to think more clearly and formulate arguments for Christianity rather than against. He found peace, not anger and bitterness.

Lewis was not brought up in a Christian home. His uncle took him to church but he often mitched off. As a teenager he got into a fight at a bus stop because he was a Protestant and the “other fella” was a Roman Catholic. Lewis didn’t even know the difference between the two doctrines.

He was close to his devout grandmother, and remembered part of a prayer which she often used. Lewis had the difficult experience of watching her waste away through cancer to death. He was bitter and angry because his granny died.

Later Lewis studied a Biology degree at UU, which led him to believe that science held all the answers. Then, like Rab, he went through a bad divorce and was left struggling to care for his daughter. Through the gym he met a Canadian lady, Charlotte, who was a Christian, and who gave him a Bible to read. The pair spent a lot of time debating science v Christianity and gradually Lewis felt that there were gaps in his knowledge that the Bible could fill. Eventually he prayed out loud for help. He met Rab at a gym and was helped by that fellowship to grow in faith. He found peace, not anger and bitterness.

Three strong men, three very different journeys, yet one clear testimony. Each had known pain, anger and loss; each was met by patient Christians who walked alongside them; and each discovered that real strength is not found in lifting weights, but in surrendering life to Christ.

The Men’s Fellowship evening reminded us that God works through ordinary means and faithful witness over time. Reflecting on 1 Timothy 6:11, Ben called us to be men of God — to turn from sin, to pursue righteousness, godliness and self-control, and to stand firm for truth, beauty and goodness, laying hold of the eternal life to which we have been called.

We thank Shem, Rab and Lewis for their honesty and courage, and pray that their Strongman ministry will continue to point many others to the peace and purpose found in Jesus Christ.

Boys Brigade Legacy Badge Night

The Boys Brigade Legacy Badge is intended to provide a chance for fathers (or grandfathers) to build relationships by spending some time having fun with their sons.

Fathers were encouraged to come along to BB with their sons on a Tuesday evening in February. Gathering at first in Room 4, the boys were encouraged to say and write down what they loved about their father. Then the fathers were asked to introduce their boys and state what made them proud about the boy. There were some quite moving moments in the exchange of these words.

Moving into the Sports Hall, everyone tried activities such as making jigsaws together, crazy putting (very difficult on a shiny floor), or drawing a head and shoulders picture of your dad.

Undoubtedly the best fun was to put on a "sumo suit" and have father v son competition. Not surprisingly there was a competitive edge, the agility of the son against the greater bulk of the father. There was a bit

of wrestling and inevitably some fell or were pushed over. Lots of laughter followed when realisation dawned that it was much easier to fall over than get back up again!

To win the Legacy badge the boys and father had to pledge to continue to build on the evening by undertaking follow-up activities in their own time. The most popular pledges were to share in each others hobbies, be that golf or gaming, and to train together with the aim of taking part in a 5k run.



POINTS FOR PRAYER

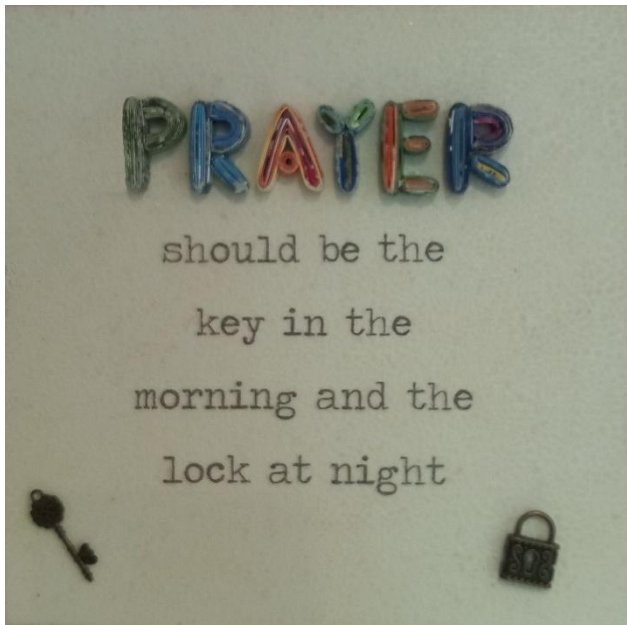
Both our BB and GB companies took part in the "Pray Where You Are" day on 21st February.

Please use the following Points for Prayer for our BB & GB Companies in your own devotions

- Pray for the volunteer leaders and helpers as they prepare each week.
- Pray for the children and young people who attend BB & GB, and their families, that seeds will be planted and they will know God's love for them.
- Pray for growth and that new churches would be interested in starting BB & GB companies.
- Pray for companies that are struggling, that numbers will grow and that they will be able to get new volunteers.
- Pray for chaplains and the wider church family.
- Pray for BBNI & GBNI staff members and those leaders who serve beyond their company.

The Key and the Lock

In my home there is a small but meaningful piece of artwork that reads, “Prayer should be the key in the morning and the lock in the evening.”



Though simple, those words carry a profound truth. They serve as a daily reminder of my deep dependence on God. Before the rush of the day begins and after its demands have taken their toll, prayer frames everything. It opens the door to God’s presence in the morning and gently closes the day in His peace at night.

To say that prayer is the “key” in the morning is to acknowledge that we do not step into the day alone. We unlock the hours ahead by first coming before the Lord — seeking His wisdom, surrendering our plans, and asking for strength. The psalmist expresses this beautifully: “In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly” (Psalm 5:3). Morning prayer is not merely routine; it is an act of trust. We bring our needs to God and wait in expectation, confident that He hears us.

The reformer Martin Luther understood this well. He is credited with famously saying “I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer”. Busy days need even more time with God, not less, “because we have so much to do.” For Luther, prayer was not a delay to productivity but the foundation of it. Human effort alone is never enough. The busier the day, the more the need for communion with God first.

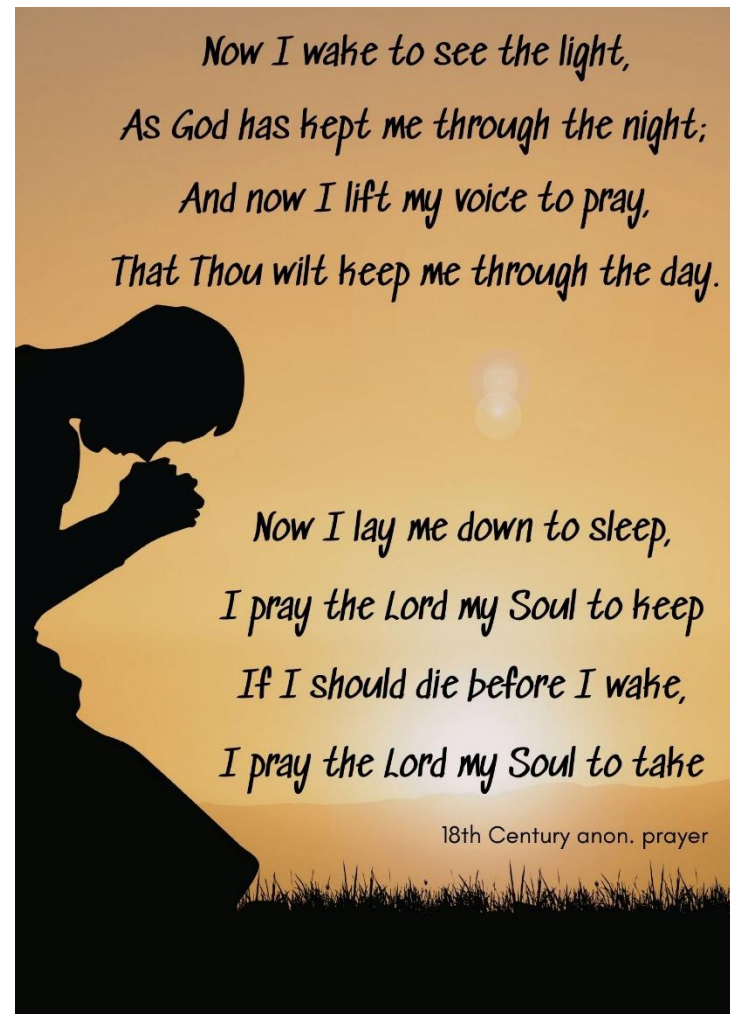
We often think the opposite. When life feels overwhelming, prayer can be the first thing squeezed out of our schedules. ‘Sure I can just pray on my way

to do that thing’ ‘God will hear me whatever I’m doing’ Yet that is precisely when we need it most. When we feel we have too much to do, too many responsibilities, too many concerns, prayer grounds us. It reminds us that God is sovereign, that He carries burdens we cannot, and that His grace is sufficient for every task before us. Time spent in prayer is never wasted; it is time invested in eternity.

And as prayer is the key in the morning, it is also the “lock” in the evening. The day may have brought joy or disappointment, success or struggle, but we are invited to lay it all before the Lord. Psalm 4:8 offers this beautiful assurance: “In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.” Night-time prayer releases anxieties and places our trust back into God’s faithful hands.

May we learn to begin and end each day with Him — unlocking our mornings with hope and closing our evenings in peace.

Ben McFall



The “morning and evening” prayer shown in the above graphic is a fuller version of his granny’s prayer remembered by Lewis in the Strongmen article. Ed.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Zaro Mission Appeal. Our partners in ZARO are thrilled and delighted that enough has been raised to put a roof on their new church building.



Their Minister Rev Godsons Maere writes “offering heartfelt thanksgiving for His faithfulness and for the remarkable opportunities He has granted us through you, the church members, and organisations. By God’s grace, the resources you have helped mobilise within such a short period of time have filled our hearts with hope and renewed strength. The joy and gratitude from Malawi, particularly from Zaro CCAP Congregation, are truly beyond human expression.”

He explains: “...The church building is now ready for roofing, and we expect a dry period of approximately two weeks in March. This window presents a God-given opportunity for us to complete the roofing before Easter. Should this be achieved, it would be a profound blessing for the congregation to celebrate the Easter service within our new church building—an

answered prayer and a historic moment for our community of faith.”

“There is a special kind of joy—the kind that is born from hope fulfilled, from prayers answered, and from good news that changes hearts. When I announced the news that our church will finally be roofed, smiles lit up faces, laughter filled the air, and joy overflowed as if it had come from another world. It was a moment I will never forget.”

“May you remain richly blessed. Your love and generosity have written a joyful chapter in our story, and we carry you in our prayers with grateful hearts... We express our sincere gratitude for your commitment, sacrifice, and partnership in God’s work. May the Almighty God richly bless you and reward you abundantly for your faithfulness.”

Here in First Larne we are so thankful that we have been able to raise and send enough money to roof Zaro church. We will be delighted to receive all further gifts and fundraising monies toward the Zaro Mission Project and confirm that these will be ringfenced for Zaro CCAP as our partners work together to complete and furnish their new church.

Your generous gifts will bless and enable the people of Zaro CCAP congregation in rural Malawi to meet, worship and serve God for many years to come.

Robin Tweed, Clerk of Session

Fireside Quiz for the Zaro Church Roofing Fund – The Answers

Many thanks to the “In Stiches” ladies for devising the Fireside Quiz for the Zaro Church Roofing Fund. If you haven’t seen the answers yet, here they are. The answers were all places, small and larger, in N. Ireland.

- 1 Insect on the edge - **Antrim**
- 2 Forbidden Game - **Banbridge**
- 3 Played out instrument - **Dundrum**
- 4 This duck has a toy - **Ballinamallard**
- 5 A modern fort - **Newcastle**
- 6 Final resting place - **Toome**
- 7 A mound for a pig - **Ahoghill**
- 8 Black downpour - **Coleraine**
- 9 Abandon the TV doctor - **Desertmartin**
- 10 Traverse my valley - **Crossmaglen**
- 11 A dancing golf score - **Ballybogey**
- 12 Murder the Scottish cow - **Kilcoo**

- 13 Sounds like the sofa accessory is finished - **Cushendun**
- 14 Late Queen in a wee stream - **Lisburn**
- 15 This girl isn’t short - **Annalong**
- 16 Chef’s place - **Cookstown**
- 17 Big fish in the middle of falling water - **Rasharkin**
- 18 Has stopped donating - **Dungiven**
- 19 Exhalations in workplaces – **Sion Mills**
- 20 An affluent knoll - **Richhill**

(At the time of going to print the amount raised from the fireside quiz and the winners of the prizes were not known Ed.)

Where hardship means hunger, Christian Aid Week 10th-16th May

In many developing countries people move towards the big cities seeking work. But often the dream of a good job and secure living is not the reality.

In the crowded and bustling makeshift settlements (shanty towns) of Nairobi, Kenya, most parents wake every day knowing that they must go and earn money, otherwise their children won't eat that evening.

Dagoretti is one such settlement. With secure jobs hard to find, and most people earning less than a dollar a day, buying food is a constant struggle. With rent, school fees, medicine and water to pay for too, some days there just isn't enough money for a meal. Here, aching hunger compounds relentless stress. It's a precarious and frightening daily struggle that no family should have to face.



Fridah lives in Dagoretti....the stress shows in her face.

But, with help from Beacon Of Hope, a Christian Aid partner, Fridah has joined a self-help group to farm vegetables in a small city plot.



By providing small urban allotments, seeds, tools and agricultural training Beacon of Hope allows families to turn to farming and harvest precious produce such as kale, cabbage and tomatoes. Nutritious vegetables are reaching children's dinner plates and income is being earned through the sale of surplus food in local markets. Parents who once lived day to day, making impossible choices on how to meet their children's needs, are now buying everyday essentials, such as school books, and saving for a brighter future.

Fridah lost her husband unexpectedly as the result of an accident in February 2025. Her income from selling crops in the market now supports the rest of the family.



Life is still hard. Fridah lives in a single room which she rents, with her twin sons Abiud (left) and Eliud (right) her daughter (not pictured) and her grandson Quillan (4). But, by participating in the project, people like Fridah and her family now have hope.



Together, we can support families to escape the cruel grip of urban poverty

Members of First Larne will be helping to distribute the red Christian Aid week donation envelopes. The envelopes can be returned to designated locations, including First Larne.

Alternatively, make a donation by phoning the Christian Aid Belfast office on **028 9064 8133** or online at www.christianaid.ie/give-money/make-donation. Your donations will help families like Fridah's turning hunger into hope.

Thank you from Larne Christian Aid Group.

Safeguarding in First Larne

In November the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) acknowledged that there had been failings in safeguarding duties within the church. As there is an on-going police investigation, legal restrictions mean that some matters must remain confidential for the time being. However, the following has been reported.

In November Rev. David Bruce, Convener of the General Council of PCI, apologised to those people affected. "Above and beyond all, our primary concern is the people who have been harmed, placed at risk, or who simply didn't hear from us when they needed help or guidance. We have let you down, and for this I am truly sorry. It should not have happened. I want you to know that we will do everything we can to both put in place better arrangements to prevent this occurring again, and to put the appropriate help and support in place for you now."

Speaking at a Special Assembly (attended by Rev. McClure and Ken McKinley) held on 18th February, the Moderator, Right Reverend Dr. Richard Murray affirmed those "who have faithfully and dutifully carried out their safeguarding duties" but recognised that "others have failed us."

"When we announced in November our failures in central safeguarding, we called for victims, survivors, and those with concerns, to come forward. To those who have done so, we want to acknowledge their bravery, and apologise again to those who have suffered or been harmed due to our inactions or inadequate responses. For these, we continue to deeply lament."

PCI have started to implement changes as a result of these events. At the Special Assembly changes to the management structure of the church were announced, with the creation of a Senior Leadership Team of three people. A new post "Director of Operations" will be responsible for the operational side of running what is effectively one of the largest churches and charities in Ireland.

Details of the discussions that took place and the decisions that were taken at the Special Assembly, can be found in "The Review", which is available on the PCI website at

[issueu.com/presbyterianireland/docs/the_special_assembly_review_2026](https://www.pciireland.com/issueu.com/presbyterianireland/docs/the_special_assembly_review_2026).

General Assembly is now planned to take place, with an extra day, from 9th to 12th June. This will permit consideration and discussion about issues arising from the on-going work on safeguarding in PCI. These include the new safeguarding department, new policies and procedures; PCI's use of compromise agreements; issues of culture, governance and integrity; and an assessment of the need for a survivor redress scheme.

With regards to the police investigation itself, PCI remain committed to co-operating fully with the police and would encourage anyone who believes they may have relevant information, or who wishes to make a report, to do so via e-mail to :

PClenquiry@psni.police.uk,

or by contacting the PCI safeguarding team on :

safeguarding@presbyterianireland.org.

First Larne has had robust safeguarding procedures in place for many years, including the vetting and training of all those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Indeed, those working in our uniformed youth organisations undergo additional training and resourcing.

Over the next few months we will be holding important refresher training that all leaders will have the opportunity to benefit from.

If anyone has any concerns or queries regarding our safeguarding procedures please speak to our Safeguarding Officer, Lynda Hill, or our minister Rev. Dr. Colin McClure. Queries should be sent to :

designatedpersonfirstlarne@gmail.com

Now There's a Thought

Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common, and also more hard to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: it is easier to say "My tooth is aching" than to say "My heart is broken."

CS Lewis



Messy Church at Christmas

Messy Church is part of our family ministry at First Larne where we invite family units (however that looks for you). We want to support you as a family have conversations of faith, and encourage you to be able to pass faith on to the next generation.

Messy Christmas was a wonderful celebration filled with laughter, whipped cream, and discovery! We kicked things off with a brilliantly chaotic “make a mince pie” quiz game — a perfectly messy way to get started.



From there we began thinking about adventures. Every great story involves a journey, and Christmas is no different. We talked about what it means to go on an adventure and then set off on one of our own! Families explored together to find five hidden QR codes around the building. Using a phone to scan each code, they could unlock five short videos telling the incredible story of Jesus’ birth — a promise made long ago and faithfully fulfilled by God. We had craft and games to reinforce the story at each video.



Why not join us for our next adventure? Come along on 29th March for Messy Easter — we can’t wait to see you there!

After we journeyed through the story, we paused to ask an important question: when we go on an adventure, who do we follow? On a mountain trail we follow a guide. On a treasure hunt we follow the clues. In life, we all follow someone or something. The Christmas story reminds us that Jesus is the One worth following — the promised Saviour, sent to lead us into hope, peace, and true joy. We encouraged the children to think about choosing to follow Him in their own everyday adventures.

It was a joyful, noisy, thoughtful time together, and we loved seeing families explore the Christmas story in such a hands-on way.

Why not join us for our next adventure? Come along on 29th March for Messy Easter — we can’t wait to see you there!



Christmas Appeals

PCI World Development Appeal

The collection for the “Hives of Hope” Appeal raised £2397.50 including Gift Aid.



The annual collection in support of the Presbyterian Children’s Society raised £478.50. Many thanks to all the collectors.



Christmas Gifts on the Tree:

Members of our congregation and of Larne Methodist congregation provided Christmas gifts for around 130 families and individuals.

In these difficult times the need of many families at home and worldwide is growing. These gifts are much appreciated. Thank you to everyone who donated.

Indoor Bowls – Competition News

Stinson Shield

On 25th February the annual Stinson Shield match, between First Larne and Gardenmore, took place in the Sports Hall. This annual event has been taking place over many years and is a great opportunity for both clubs to socialise and play a competitive game of bowls. Over the years the honours between the two Clubs have been pretty evenly shared. This year First Larne won the competition, but, only by 2 shots.

L to R : Neal Quinn from Gardenmore hands the trophy to the First Larne team - Moira Swann, Robert Burch, Rodney Moore & Mary Magill.



McClay Trophy

On the following evening, 26th February, the Larne & District Indoor Bowling League held the annual McClay Trophy charity competition which is a Ladies versus Gents match.

This year £705 was raised for the nominated charity, Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke and the ladies were victorious, winning the match by just one shot.



Many thanks to everyone who helped to organise these events and donated to such a worthwhile cause

And of course, on both nights, we had room for a cup of tea and a chat....

Rodney Moore



Thank you from First Larne Presbyterian Women

Thank you to everyone who supported PW last year by filling our little blue mission boxes. The total raised was £763.98.

This money will be added to funds raised by other PW groups to support two projects. The home project is the outreach ministry at "The Haven" based in Sligo Presbyterian Church, which is a centre supporting people from all backgrounds through a cafe, social activities and English classes.

The overseas project is supporting a Crisis Centre in Ukraine by assisting with the provision of new, improved bathroom facilities for the families staying there.

Thanks also to those who took part in our table quiz for Zoro Church.

June Bryson

(At the time of going to print the amount raised from the table quiz was not known Ed.)





Messy Easter

SUNDAY
29TH
MARCH

3.30 - 5pm

FIRST LARNE CHURCH HALLS

GAMES,
SONGS,
FUN, &
EGGS

SIGN UP
NOW



EASTER @ FIRST LARNE

22nd March

Christ in the Passover
with Ziggy Rogoff **11am**

Palm Sunday 29th March

ALL-IN Service **11am**
Messy Easter **3.30pm**

HOLY WEEK A Scandalous Coronation
(Lunch-Time Reflections) **1230pm**

Monday 30th March

Behold the Man

Tuesday 31st March

An Ordinary Day

Wednesday 1st April

Down Among Golgotha's Scoffers
Thursday 2nd April

On the Via Dolorosa

Good Friday 3rd April

Good Friday Communion **8pm**

Easter Sunday 5th April

Easter Dawn Service **7am**
followed by breakfast in Craigy Hill
Presbyterian
Easter Celebration at Frist Larne -
The Kings Forgives **11am**



FIRST LARNE FAMILY EVENTS 2026

DONE

KIDS&YOUTH CHURCH FEAST

MESSY EASTER 29TH MAR

BREAKFAST FEAST 9TH MAY

AFTER CHURCH PICNIC 21ST JUN

HOLIDAY BIBLE CLUB 3RD AUG

BIG GAMES FEAST 7TH AUG

AFTER CHURCH FEAST 18TH OCT

MESSY CHRISTMAS 13TH DEC



HOLIDAY Bible CLUB

3-7
AUGUST



SAVE the DATE

CHURCH REGISTER

DEATHS

John ("Jackie") Gibson	12 Greenland Crescent	17 th November 2025
Peter Magee	21 The Beeches	18 th December 2025
Margaret Jane Carter	27 Ilse Court	19 th January 2026
Jean Hood	1 Glenvale Park	29 th January 2026
Margaret Elizabeth Aicken	Larne Care Centre (formerly 15 Coastguard Road)	10 th February 2026

Sunday Mornings @11 after Easter

April

- 12th : What do You Hear? John 20 v.1-22
 19th : Women Dismissed as Telling an Idle Tale Luke 24 v.1-12
 26th : Faithful to the King. Luke 19 v 11-27

May

- 3rd : Mary at the wedding at Cana John 2 v.1-12
 10th : Martha's Confession of Faith John 11
 17th : ASCENSION Acts 1 v.1-11
 24th : PENTECOST Acts 2 v.1-21
 31st : ALL-IN SERVICE

June

- 7th : Huldah and bringing God's Word 2 Kings 22
 14th : **Communion**
 21st : **Congregational Lunch**

Now There's a Thought (2)

Put this on your desk for those times when you have been working too hard

A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops.

On my desk at home, I have a work station.

Sunday Evenings @7 in First Larne

On Sunday evenings at 7pm in Room 4 after Easter we continue our study series **"Jesus the Game Changer"**:

April

- 12th : The importance of forgiveness
 19th : Education & Health
 26th : Wealth

May

- 3rd : Reason & Science
 10th : Democracy

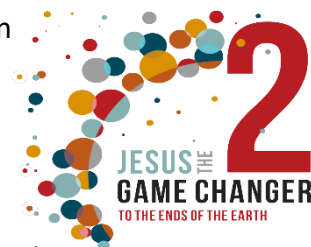
From Sunday 17th May we embark on a new study **"To the ends of the earth"**

May

- 17th : Making Jesus' Last Words Our First Priority
 24th : New Identity in Christ
 31st : Dealing with Opposition

June

- 7th : The Bible – beyond Information, bringing transformation
 14th **Communion**
 21st : Crossing the Cultural Divide
 28th : The Ends of the Earth



AND FINALLY.....

Three good friends, Sammy, a Presbyterian minister, Sean, a Roman Catholic priest, and Solomon, a Jewish rabbi met up for lunch occasionally.

At one meal Rabbi Solomon raised his glass of wine and said "My friends I want to thank you for your fellowship." As the glasses clinked the rabbi added "Sammy, you really should try this wine, it is excellent. After all, Jesus turned water into wine." A smiling Sean added "Yes, take the advice of St Paul to Timothy. Take a little wine." Sammy, who was teetotal, smiled. He was used to his friends teasing.

He set his glass of orange down and started to cut a piece off his gammon. "I'm glad you have been reading the New Testament Soly. Have you read about Peter's vision in Acts 10?" Sean, quick as ever, added "Oh, you mean when God told Peter to kill and eat animals that were unclean." The smiling rabbi got the joke, "But we all have our traditions" he said

Sammy sighed "Ah yes, our traditions. You know I think I will try wine.... one day, and Soly, you could try a gammon steak with pineapple and chips. Perhaps that will happen at Sean's wedding."

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