



First Larne Presbyterian Church

Bridge News

Worship God, Build His Kingdom, Share His Love

Stay **SAFE** at church



COVID 19 AND OUR
SERVICES



BERTIE & VICTOR
- FONDLY REMEMBERED



JACQUELINE'S BIG DAY



THE DOORS ARE OPEN AGAIN!
EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Late Summer 2020

No. 410

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Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104895)





COLIN'S COLUMN

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

As we prepare to reopen our Meeting House for gathered worship on Sunday 6th September for the first time since Sunday 15th March, I looked back at the text for that March morning's service. We read Numbers 6 v.22-27, the Aaronic Blessing usually sung at our baptism services: "The Lord bless you and keep you...."

In the original context God looks the Children of Israel in the eye and blesses them – yet another reminder of His direct and unequivocal faithfulness to them before they set off towards the Promised Land. These people had just been miraculously freed from their bondage in Egypt and yet the remainder of the Book of Numbers catalogues how they catastrophically messed up, wandering in a wilderness for forty years when the journey should have taken only weeks.

In unmistakeable terms God has called them to advance and promised them the land, but on their journey they respond with fear not faith; they drew back. Doubting God, they sealed their fate. At the first sign of pressure these chosen people, that generation who had received God's blessing and the reassurance of His power and presence, grumbled, lost direction and lost sight of that Promised Land where they were intended to go. They doubted God had a purpose for them and, as a result, they wandered aimlessly and a whole generation went nowhere!

As we prepare to reopen our Meeting House on 6th September how our world has changed since 15th March. Who would have predicted on St Patrick's Day that an environmentalist's wish list would have been achieved by the 12th July? Carbon emissions have fallen drastically, air travel almost ceased, air pollution in cities fallen so that mega-cities like Mumbai had the first clear skies in decades. The intriguing images of wildlife encroaching into human habitation amused us. The oil industry wondered

what to do with the oil and some of our neighbours used more cash in putting fuel into their lawnmowers than their cars. These same cars sat motionless in driveways, just as we were shown rows of aeroplanes mothballed on unused runways. But the effects have not all been curiosities we can observe whimsically from a distance. There was the initial anxiety about securing essential food, hygiene and medical supplies. In just a few short months our pensions and savings have plummeted, jobs and incomes have become insecure and we have endured the privations of emergency-only healthcare. I am speaking to different generations, attempting to get on with living, but each with their own uncertainties. All this caused by a microscopic RNA virus.

In this season of our existence we are now embarking on a journey into a world that will look and feel rather different for most of us. If we are journeying as God's people today we must not succumb to the traps the Children of Israel of yesteryear fell for. Consequently, our new reality (whatever that "new normal" is for you) calls us to imagine new possibilities in how we live out our faith.

Whilst we are all in the same storm we are not in the same boat. If God is with us where we are and amongst the people we are called to serve, even though we are together as Church - His journeying people - we will each have a unique calling. It may not be as dramatic as the genocidal-preventing role of the Old Testament heroine Esther. Faced with the annihilation of her people, her dilemma and her opportunity were bluntly posed by her uncle Mordecai:

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4 v.14

Like Esther we can trust that the God who blesses us is the God who has placed us where we are **for such a time as this**. Like Esther we can either seize the moment or sit back; step forward, be counted or sit pretty (she had won a beauty contest!) She could have opted to passively watch on and wait for the relief to come from elsewhere. Likewise, if we are not working with God He will fulfil His purpose by other means.

Given the rather salacious aspects of her story the televised drama of Esther's route to becoming queen could only be shown after the watershed. Nevertheless, had she become queen by chance or was she there **for such a time as this**?

The journey we are now taking into the future has uncertainty at every turn and on every level of our existence and experience. On reflecting upon the legacy of the Irish-born adventurer Sir Ernest Shackleton many years after his death at Grytviken, South Georgia in 1922, a contemporary Antarctic explorer made this comparison: "Scott for scientific method, Amundsen for speed and efficiency but when disaster strikes and all hope is gone, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton." Shackleton was not flawless, but he did have a leadership style that inspired vision and purpose in his team. He is perhaps best remembered for epically leading his entire ship's crew of 27 from what would have been certain death in the Antarctic. In his book on Shackleton's leadership, American theologian Leonard Sweet comments:

"He listened to the soundscapes of nature, the vibrations of the air, the creaking of the ice, the voices of the animals. He could tell the world was different because it sounded different, and he studied the sounds to learn the difference."

SERVICES IN SEPTEMBER: FAQs

The guidance notes on the following pages give detailed information about the resumption of services in the meeting house. However, the following are the questions I have been most frequently asked:

Who can come to the services?

Anyone! Everyone is welcome. However, those showing any symptoms of infection should not attend. It is also understood that some people will have good reason to exercise caution in returning to a gathered service.

What will the service be like?

Different! As always, the Word of God will be paramount. There will be music but no singing in the usual way. Although there will be readings, prayers and preaching, the service will be shorter than usual.

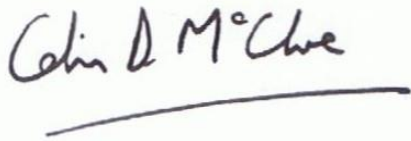
Can children come?

Of course! However, as there will be no Kids' Church, Youth Church, or crèche in the early stages, the

The future is not what it used to be! So much is so different now. Former assumptions have disappeared. Of course we are disorientated, unsettled and anxious. But this is precisely the time and place where we need to be listening, discerning the voice of God in this new landscape.

Back on the 15th March we concluded the morning service with the Aaronic Blessing, "The Lord bless you and keep you...." Every service – in the meeting house or online - concludes with the pronouncement of the benediction, a blessing from God. Each time the benediction should lift our eyes to the horizon of the future where we will fully know God's blessings and lift our eyes to keep going through the transitory experiences of joy and sorrow, triumph and challenge.

The benediction, the blessing, at the conclusion of each service reminds us that God is always there to bless us – but that we must take that blessing seriously and live that blessing seriously. It is who we are, blessed and sent, **for such a time as this**.....



Rev. Colin McClure

services will be very intentionally geared in format, content and duration towards an all-age, intergenerational community. Children will sit with their family.

Will there still be streaming of services?

YES! During most of the pandemic period our online services have been pre-recorded. From the 6th September we will have the facility to provide high quality **live** streaming of the service on Facebook, YouTube and then a video can be accessed at any time. You can also access the audio by dialling (028) 91249550. We will continue to provide CDs and DVDs on request. No one need be excluded!

Do I need to wear a face-covering?

Although now mandatory in services in England, at the time of writing this was not so in Northern Ireland. We would strongly recommend that, if possible, face coverings should be worn. Whilst worshippers are encouraged to bring their own face-coverings disposable face-coverings will be available.

Stay **SAFE** at church

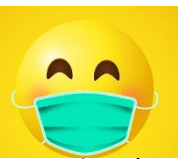


The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we have to do many things, including going to church. Please read and observe the following guidance.

Before coming to church

If you or anyone in your household has any symptoms of coronavirus you must not attend services.

In order to gauge numbers and ensure seating is available in accordance with social distancing requirements, please let the church know that you will be attending. This can be done by telephone to the answering machine in the Church Office (28269968) or by e-mail to admin@firstlarne.org.uk providing a name and the numbers from your household attending e.g. McClure 3. Or, if you are on-line, you can use the Eventbrite service via the link on our Facebook page or website.



The wearing of face masks is not compulsory, but it is strongly recommended that people should do so. Please bring your own face covering but, if you do not have one, disposable masks will be offered as you enter the church.

Due to the risk of cross contamination all Bibles and hymnbooks will be removed from the pews. You can bring your own Bible and hymnbook if you wish.

Prepare to arrive in good time - **doors will open at 10.30am to avoid congestion.**



Due to the cross-contamination risk, tea, coffee, biscuits etc. cannot be served before, or after the service.

On arrival at church



Please observe the 2m social distancing rule in the car park.

Those attending worship will enter the meeting house via the left and right front doors, the centre doors will not be used. The link doors and the Glynn Road door will not be opened.



The toilets in the link corridor will be available for use but these must be accessed through the Meeting House. Anyone using a toilet will be asked to clean the hard surfaces themselves. Anti-bacterial wipes will be placed in the toilets for this purpose.

All other parts of the church complex including the basement toilets, halls, kitchen and coffee bar are out of bounds.

People using the front left door will be directed to the Glynn Road side of the meeting house and those using the right door will be directed to the Inver side. Available seats within the pews will be highlighted by signage. Approximately 24 ground floor pews will be available. The gallery (at present) will be closed off.

Each available pew will be numbered and rows not being used will be cordoned off.



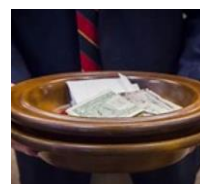
The steward will request you to sanitise your hands. Sanitiser will be provided.

The church is required to record your name and telephone number for contact tracing purposes and the steward will do this on a record sheet. The regulations require that the records are kept for 14 days after which they will be destroyed.

People attending will not be able to 'pick' where they sit. The aim is to spread people out around the sanctuary to maximise social distancing and avoid people squeezing past one another to get to or leave their seat. Couples and families living in the same house will be able to sit together which will increase the number that can be accommodated.

The steward will direct you to your seat and make a record of your seat number for contact tracing purposes. Pews will be filled from the front of the Meeting House to the rear.

Bins will be available to dispose of waste tissues, face coverings etc.



Collection of offering - we are not permitted to pass a collection plate from person to person. Buckets will be placed on both sides of the vestibule and at the exit doors to receive the weekly offering i.e. FWO, UA etc.

At the end of the service

Please remain in your seats until directed to leave. The Minister will ask people to leave the Church when directed by the stewards. This will be done one row at a time.

Stewards will invite attendees to sanitise their hands when they exit the complex.

Please leave the building and do not congregate in the vestibule or other areas.

Church Organisations Update

Creche, Kids’ Church, Youth Church and FLY :

Mindful of the challenges facing schools there will be no resumption of gathering in the usual way for the first weeks of the new session. Virtual provision will continue until such times as it is possible to meet. If you have any difficulty accessing any of the online provision contact any of the leaders or the Rev. McClure (cmccclure@presbyterianireland.org).

Toddler Group : All of the leaders are missing our little people but at this stage have no plans for re-opening. Once schools have re-opened and larger groups are allowed to meet indoors, a limited get-together may be possible but not before Hallowe’en and doubtful even by Christmas. Janet Tweed

First Larne Indoor Bowling Club are planning, subject to guidance, to re-start on Wednesday 16 September at 7.15pm. In these exceptional times special safety control measures will be in place for the protection of members. If you would like further details please contact me on 07843 118362. Rodney Moore

Monday Afternoon Bowling Club : God willing, the new bowling season will begin on Monday September 28th at 1.15pm. All current members will be contacted by phone before this date. Kirk Session are currently looking at the health and safety measures that must be adhered to. Despite these challenging times we very much look forward to our new season. Mary Magill

Girls’ Brigade : normal meeting is suspended until at least November. Keep watching the Parents of First Larne Girls Brigade Facebook page for more information and updates. Awards and presentations will be given out on our first night back. Deborah Dines


Third Larne Guides : At the moment we anticipate resuming face-to-face meetings possibly around half-term. Before then we hope to hold some meetings via Zoom - new members welcome! Please contact heather.g.murray2012@gmail.com for more info. Heather, Kathryn and Gillian

Rangers : We have kept in touch with the girls via social media since lockdown in March. We have no plans at present to return to normal weekly meetings. We may be able to meet outside towards the end of September, but continue to follow guidelines sent to us by Girlguiding UK. Judith Evans and Shirley Torbitt

1st Larne Boys Brigade hope and plan to have Virtual Sessions and “BB at Home” activities in mid September. We also pray that we will be able to meet in Church in early November with safety measures in place. Please keep up to date with 1st Larne BB Facebook. Wesley Magill

In Stitches kept in touch as far as was possible via a fortnightly Zoom meeting. It was great to support each other, considering some were shielding. Everyone has been working away in the background. If anyone has blankets or baby clothes they have made and need to have them delivered to Blythswood, please get in touch. Judith Evans

Men’s Fellowship will not be meeting before the beginning of November. They intend to remain in contact using the WhatsApp message board. Sandy Lindsay

 The committee has decided to delay organising a programme for this incoming year. There are no plans to re-meet until after Halloween at the earliest and then only on a very informal basis. Members continue to contact and support each other. Our theme for this year is very aptly based on 1 Thessalonians 5 v1 “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” Janet Tweed

Women’s Circle have no plans made for meetings next season. As soon as we are advised by Kirk Session and we can adhere to all the safety advice we will be in touch with members D.V. God bless and take care until we can all meet again. Ina Ross

Wee Cup of Friendship : A restart will be announced DV when it is deemed safe and appropriate for participants. Bev Moore

COMPARISON OF THE FINANCIAL SITUATION FOR 2019 AND 2020.....

| | | |
|-------------------|---------|----------------|
| End of June 2019: | Income | £68,695 |
| | Spend | £93,516 |
| | Deficit | £24,821 |
| End of July 2019: | Income | £82,711 |
| | Spend | £98,621 |
| | Deficit | £15,910 |

| | | |
|-------------------|---------|----------------|
| End of June 2020: | Income | £71,342 |
| | Spend | £86,353 |
| | Deficit | £15,011 |
| End of July 2020: | Income | £92,803 |
| | Spend | £94,443 |
| | Deficit | £1,640 |

Initial viewing of these figures comparing the financial situation in June and July 2019 with those months in 2020 would suggest that the deficit is not as bad in 2020 as it was in 2019. However up to the end of July we received £21,200 to help pay the wages for our furloughed staff via the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) which substantially reduced the deficit. Without this financial aid the deficit would have been **£22,840**. From 1st August the money we receive from the CJRS starts to reduce and the scheme finishes at the end of October. We anticipate that all of our staff will stay on furlough until the end of October. We have 2 payments due to PCI (in August and November) totalling **£40,000**.

Despite generous giving in the latter part of 2019 as well as some legacies we still ended the year with a deficit of £14,664. We can't be sure of what money we will receive before the end of 2020, but the likelihood is that First Larne will be in a very serious financial situation with a large deficit. This will require us to take money from our reserves to meet our expenses. The Office Bearers would encourage all members of our congregation to consider setting up a monthly Standing Order, to sign up for Gift Aid if you haven't

already done so or to contact your district Elder/Committee member to arrange collection of any church envelopes. You are also encouraged to contribute to United Appeal which supports the mission work of the Presbyterian Church. At the end of July we were **£11,300** short of our target of £18,900.

Now there's a thought...

One of the most striking images in recent months was of a black man, Patrick Hutchinson, carrying to safety an injured white counter protester at a Black Lives Matter protest, who allegedly had been shouting racist abuse a few minutes earlier. This image brought to mind the song "He ain't heavy, he's my brother" by the Hollies....

The road is long
With many a winding turn
That leads us to who knows
where?
But I'm strong,
Strong enough to carry him
So on we go
His welfare is my concern.....



Both the song and Mr Hutchinson's actions have echoes of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The coronavirus pandemic has already produced a long road with many a winding turn, and the health and economic consequences grow daily at home and worldwide. We don't have to be seen on television, our world is full of small but important acts of kindness. So do we just hum the tune of "He ain't heavy, he's my brother" and hurry past or do we give someone in need a lift?

Some happy news

End of year gifts from Kids' Church back in June, brought smiles to some of our children including Ayinta and Luke Russell and Leo Filbey.....



CONGRATULATIONS!.... to our Community Support Worker, Jacqueline McCallum, who tied the knot with fiancée, Paul Murphy, on 15th August at Craigmore Methodist Church, Aghalee. The service was conducted by the Rev. Leslie Spence who some may remember from his time spent at Larne Methodist Church.



CHURCH REGISTER

DEATHS

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Thomas James Irwin | 35 Wellington Avenue | 13 th June 2020 |
| Robert Johnston | 12 Lansdowne Crescent | 4 th July 2020 |
| Frederick William Reid | formerly 3 Blackcave Crescent | 4 th July 2020 |
| Victor Gibson McDowell | 75 The Roddens | 19 th July 2020 |
| Pauline Ferguson | 8 Cranbourne View | 20 th July 2020 |
| Mary Edwina ("Maureen") Anderson | 16 Croft Park | 21 st July 2020 |

In July we lost two of our senior elders, Victor McDowell (aged 77) and Bertie Johnston (aged 84). By coincidence they were both ordained by a Commission of the Carrickfergus Presbytery on 6th September 1992 and both were recognised for their long service as Elder Emeritus. Rev. McClure pays tribute.....

Victor enjoyed a variety of jobs, beginning as a painter in the Moyle Hospital and as a coach painter for 20 years or so in Containerway. But perhaps he is best remembered for his more public roles later in life as a messenger at the Northern Bank and, before retirement as the caretaker and crossing patrol attendant at Olderfleet Primary School.

As an elder Victor was most diligent and highly regarded. He served as a friend to many people in his district. Throughout his life Victor lived with an array of health issues. However this did not unduly curtail his life long involvement with First Larne, in which he served in various capacities, including as a member of the Youth Guild, a Sunday School teacher, a BB officer and, perhaps most notably, as a member of the Choir. Victor certainly loved his music. In 2013 his 52 years of singing in the choir was recognised by a special presentation. Victor continued to sing with the choir until the recent restrictions, thereby completing almost 60 years in this service.



At Victor’s funeral I remarked that his birthday – Sunday 25th April 1943 – was Easter Sunday, at the

latest possible date in April. The next time Easter will be on the 25th will be 2038. The day of his birth gives a commentary and context for the eternal life that now continues for him.

Victor is survived by his wife, Deborah, and sons Jonathan and Timothy.

Bertie was an electrical engineer starting as an apprentice with James Thompson of Upper Main Street. He later became an electrical tester at BTH, which necessitated a period of training in Rugby, where he met his future wife, Doreen, at a local Presbyterian Church. They celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary on 27th September 2018.

In 1959 he began 33 years at Ballylumford Power Station as an Electrical Maintenance Engineer.

Bertie served in several capacities in First Larne using his gifts of mind, heart and hand. His diligence as a district elder was complemented by the generous sharing of his technical knowledge and abilities when work was required around the church premises.



As a founder member of the Men’s Fellowship, Bertie continued to be interested and actively involved and enjoyed the Wednesday night craic especially at the snooker table. As well as his electrical skills, Bertie’s technical aptitude was often used in photography. At a special reunion dinner in March 2015 it was Bertie who produced a very well received video presentation spanning several decades of Fellowship activity.

Bertie is survived by wife Doreen, daughter Christine and son Gordon and their families, including three grand-daughters and one great-grandson.

Cooking up a family meal is a privilege we should never take for granted. Let us always be thankful when we are able to prepare and serve up a tasty meal which will provide both enjoyment and nourishment for those we love. Go Mexico and feed the family with this very healthy and tasty, minced beef recipe. It is one of my favourite mid week meals and everyone will love topping their bowl with the refreshing avocado, cheese, cherry tomatoes and coriander.

Beefy burrito bowl (serves 4)

1 teaspoon vegetable oil; 1 red onion, thinly sliced
1 red pepper, sliced; 1 yellow pepper, sliced
2 heaped teaspoons ground cumin
1 heaped teaspoon smoked paprika
1 teaspoon mild chilli powder; 1 large clove of garlic, crushed
500g Northern Ireland Farm Quality Assured steak mince
1 tablespoon tomato puree; 1 small tin chopped tomatoes
1 can of red kidney beans, drained and rinsed

To serve

250g basmati rice, cooked according to pack instructions

Toppings

2 avocados, peeled, stone removed and sliced; the juice of 1 lime; 250g cherry tomatoes; halved
150g Cheddar cheese, grated; a small bunch of chopped coriander; a handful of rocket leaves
3 tablespoons natural yogurt



1. Heat the olive oil in a large non-stick frying pan over medium heat and cook the onion for a few minutes, stirring occasionally before adding the sliced peppers, continue to cook for 5 minutes.
2. Stir in cumin, paprika, chilli powder and crushed garlic, cook for a further minute before adding the steak mince to the frying pan. Break the mince up with a wooden spoon as it browns, stir in tomato puree and tinned tomatoes, cook for 10 minutes, then add kidney beans and cook for 2 minutes until heated through.
3. Spoon the cooked rice into deep serving bowls and top with the beef mixture.
4. Top the burrito bowls with avocado slices, cherry tomatoes, cheese, rocket leaves, coriander and a dollop of yogurt. Squeeze the lime juice over the avocado and serve.

COOK'S TIP Try serving the burrito mix, topped with grated cheese, in a tortilla wrap and serve the toppings on the side. Delicious served with sweet potato wedges.


Cookery | Campervan Weddings

AND FINALLY.....

A little boy opened the big traditional family Bible with fascination, and looked at the old pages as he turned them.

Suddenly, something fell out of the Bible, and he picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that had been pressed in between the pages.

"Mum look what I found," "What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked.

With astonishment in the young boy's voice, he answered "I think it's Adam's suit!"

