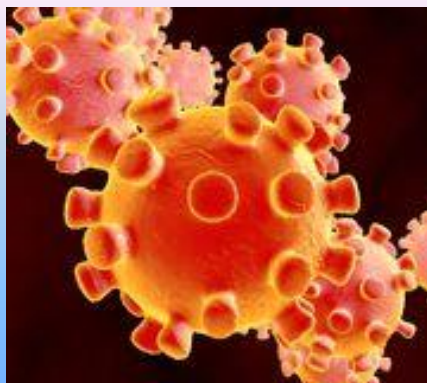




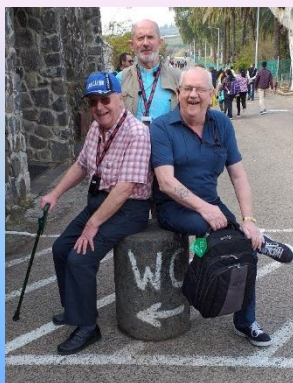
First Larne Presbyterian Church

# Bridge News

Worship God, Build His Kingdom, Share His Love



**CORONAVIRUS – WHAT IT MEANS FOR FIRST LARNE**



**A POSTCARD FROM THE HOLY LAND**



**OUR NEW ANNUAL REPORT**

“Look how the wild flowers grow.....It is God who clothes the wild grass..... Won't He be all the more sure to clothe you?”

Matthew 6 v 28-30



## Spring Edition 2020

No. 408

First Larne Presbyterian Church, Inver Road, Larne

Tel 028 28269968 E-mail : [admin@firstlarne.org.uk](mailto:admin@firstlarne.org.uk)

Web : [www.firstlarne.org.uk](http://www.firstlarne.org.uk) [www.facebook.com/Firstlarne](https://www.facebook.com/Firstlarne)

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland (NIC104895)







## COLIN'S COLUMN

### Seeing the Wood for the Trees

You must have had that weird experience of casually thinking about an apparently uncommon item and then, over the next few days, having examples unexpectedly appear on a few occasions. A friend recently recounted their experience of this when choosing a new car. As they had rather special requirements for both business and family use, they drew up a detailed list of specific features their new car must have. Using the internet they identified a specific make and model as their ideal vehicle. This is when the weird stuff began! Having this exemplar in mind they began to spot such vehicles on a surprisingly regular basis as they went about their normal routine over the following few days. They realised this was not because these particular cars had suddenly appeared in their neighbourhood. These cars had been there all the time. However, what they had previously seen but not noticed was now attracting their attention.

Scientists can trace this phenomenon to the Reticular Activating System, a pencil shaped area of the brain, that acts as a filter cutting down the unnecessary “background” noise of information so that the brain can prioritise and work more efficiently under challenging pressures. What was previously dismissed as irrelevant was, nevertheless, there all the while!

By the time you are reading this article the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic will have progressed and may well have exerted unparalleled

effects on the health of individuals and the fabric of our society. As I write this late in the evening of St. Patrick's Day, I am reflecting on a day when unprecedented formal advice has been issued that church services should “cease until further notice”. Indeed, these last few days I have spent an inordinate amount of time involved in cancelling, rescheduling or contingency planning for the full range of church organisations and activities, schools, community groups and others. In an atmosphere of uncertainty and, when a plethora of information produces confusion, it is perhaps not surprising that we have witnessed unedifying episodes of panic buying and stockpiling.

There is no doubt that this ordeal will test us. How will our community emerge? How will we as God's people emerge? Will our society's Reticular Activating System be so recalibrated that we will see things differently? Will we filter out what we come to realise is non-essential and bring into sharper focus what really matters in our relationships with one another, with our community, with our God and His creation?

Even though a microscopic virus has humbled the superpowers we humans can rightly claim to be a creative force. On 6<sup>th</sup> August 1991 the first website went live at CERN (the European Organisation for Nuclear Research) in Switzerland. Today there are 1.5 billion websites, even though less than 200 million are active. Is that not incredible ingenuity?

On the other hand, we humans can be spectacularly careless and abusive. We live in a world where fresh water, on which we all depend for survival, covers less than 1% of our planet but provides habitat for 10% of the world's species. Demand for this life-giving and life-sustaining resource is predicted to increase by 50% by 2050. But what have we done? Since 1970 in the UK there has been an 83% decline in our freshwater species of fish.

Just a few rather random statistics – and yet indicative of a disdainful neglect of our relationship with the world we have been called to care for. We are inclined to think that real sin comes at the hands of murders, robbers, cheats and bullies. However, this is also what sin looks like – our environment ravaged and destroyed.



Without resorting to facile histrionics I do want to suggest that we are living at a defining time for our generation. As this year began we knew we were facing the immediate challenge of Brexit and the longer-term threat of the climate crisis – but who saw Covid-19 coming? So what is our response? Standing up in faith or cowering in fear and faithlessness?

May this be the time when we see things differently, when we open our eyes to the awesome call and invitation of God to walk humbly, respectfully, intelligently and creatively with Him as stewards, not destroyers, of His creation.

The prophet Jeremiah was addressing the people who had it all – the Law, the teaching of the prophets and their history and heritage filled with God’s miracles of guidance and deliverance. But they had a choice to make. What sort of tree would they be?

**Jeremiah 17.7-8**

**7 Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,  
whose trust is the Lord.  
8 They shall be like a tree planted by water,  
sending out its roots by the stream.  
It shall not fear when heat comes,  
and its leaves shall stay green;  
in the year of drought it is not anxious,  
and it does not cease to bear fruit.**



The prophet points to trees as an example for us to follow so that when difficulty comes, we, like them, can hold fast to life. Trees do so much to support the world around them. They absorb carbon from the atmosphere. They hold back storms and flooding. They protect the soil and restore moisture to it. They provide habitats for wildlife.

Will this prove to be the year when, trusting and rooted in God, we in First Larne can flourish as one of the restorers of life to our community?

The heat has come. Are we withered or sturdy? Are we fearful or abundant fruit bearers?

**Rev Colin McClure**

**Coronavirus – What it means for First Larne**

Formal advice was issued on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 directing that

.....“until further notice, all congregational organisations and activities should cease... ” and that “until further notice, all Sunday gatherings for worship should also cease....”

HOWEVER, in these extraordinary and testing times the WORSHIP and PASTORAL CARE of First Larne continues!

**PASTORAL CARE**

If you or anyone you know needs pastoral support or have any other queries, please contact us in the usual way:

**Church Office 028 28269968**  
**Rev. Colin McClure 028 28272441**







**WORSHIP GOD - BUILD HIS KINGDOM - SHARE HIS LOVE**

**First Larne Care**

Helping each other as a church family

If you or someone you know needs pastoral support please

1. Contact the Church Office on 028 2826 9968  
or via email on [admin@firstlarne.org](mailto:admin@firstlarne.org)

2. Or directly contact Rev McClure on 028 2827 2441  
or via email on [cmccclure@presbyterianireland.org](mailto:cmccclure@presbyterianireland.org)

We will be continuing to offer the full range of pastoral care – albeit in an appropriately modified way and with altered priorities.

for and solidarity with our neighbours and friends. However, we need to be mindful of the welfare of the grieving family

Please continue to inform us of hospital admissions and any other situation which may require our assistance.

**FUNERALS**

Until further notice funerals will follow the normal format EXCEPT that they will be considered as “private” – essentially limited to family and very close friends.

**PRAYER RESOURCES**

The “Let’s Pray” section of the PCI website ([www.presbyterianireland.org](http://www.presbyterianireland.org)) will be populated with information and prayers to assist our day by day prayer life

**Worship – First Larne Live**

We will be gathering as a church family through the internet, so we would love to encourage you all to go online at 11am and 7pm and join us LIVE

There are three easy steps that will allow you to be part of it

- 1 Open your internet browser
- 2 Log on to [www.facebook.com/FirstLarne](http://www.facebook.com/FirstLarne)
- 3 Watch live or at a time of your choosing.

**Clear instructions are now posted on our website and Facebook page.**

Please note that you do not need to have a Facebook account, anyone with internet can access our public live video. We would love, however, that those of you who do have Facebook follow us, like, comment and share on the live video as it’s being streamed so that we can all interact with each other and be part of the service wherever we are.

We also intend to be uploading more live videos and resources for all ages at different times throughout

the weeks ahead to help us worship God, build His kingdom and share His love, so please do keep an eye on our pages.



WORSHIP GOD - BUILD HIS KINGDOM - SHARE HIS LOVE

# First Larne Live

Joining together as a church family

Steps to follow:

- 1. Open your internet browser
- 2. Go to [www.facebook.com/FirstLarne](http://www.facebook.com/FirstLarne)
- 3. Watch live or look back at it later



Dear Lord,  
You are the maker of heaven and earth,  
As we face the Coronavirus crisis help us to lift our eyes to you,  
May your peace be with those who are feeling anxious,  
May your strength be with those working to keep others safe,  
May your comfort be with those who are grieving,  
May your wisdom light the way for those making decisions,  
May your healing be upon those who are unwell,  
May your hope fill those who are fearful of the future,  
May your compassion prompt us to love our neighbours,  
Keep us from harm,  
Watch over our coming and going,  
Both now and forevermore,  
Amen.



# NEW WAYS OF REPORTING WHAT GOES ON IN FIRST LARNE

Many of us will have heard of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) either in work or maybe in letters from our banks. One of the implications of GDPR for churches is that it is no longer legal to publish personal financial information such as the records of donations to Free-Will Offering, Maintenance and the United Appeal, as has been the practice for many years in our Annual Report. In response to these legislative changes and, taking guidance from PCI and the Charities Commission, our Kirk Session have decided to make some changes in the way the information in our Annual Report is made available to the congregation.

- The separate Annual Report will no longer be produced.
- Members of First Larne will continue to receive a private personal financial statement each year.
- Other material such as reports from our financial team and church organisations will now be printed in the Bridge News, but spread between several issues.

These changes will still allow the church to meet legal and church requirements and will also make better use of our financial resources.

In the first of our reports Robin Tweed our Clerk of Session and Sandy Lindsay, our Congregational Secretary present their reports on the Kirk Session and Committee for 2019

## Kirk Session Report for 2019

*"First Larne is here to worship God, build up His church and share His love"*

*So much to celebrate – some highlights from 2019*

**Prayer Breakfast** on 9<sup>th</sup> February during the Moderator's week of prayer with former PCI Moderator Rev Dr Norman Hamilton.



**Morning Service** on 10<sup>th</sup> March broadcast on Radio Ulster to probably over 200,000 listeners.

**GB 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations** with their Display, service and dinner at the end of March and the creation of a special banner in our Memorial Hall.



Our work with **'Redeeming Our Communities'** including their community consultation on 28<sup>th</sup> May.

The **ABAANA New Life Choir**

visit from Uganda on 9<sup>th</sup> June - we celebrated together, hosted the choir members and raised over £1500 to support needy children.



Paying tribute to Doreen Irwin on her retirement from the active duties of the eldership and her acceptance of the title of **Elder Emeritus**.

Facilitating the presentation of inscribed Bibles to primary school leavers on completion of their **'It's Your Move'** programme in partnership with SU and local churches.

**Holiday Bible Club: "Teambuilders"** -29<sup>th</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August with over 110 children having fun and learning about Jesus.



**Community Night:** Friday 2nd August with around 400 people welcomed to First Larne.

**Youth Week:** an exciting week from 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> August for our older young people.



The life and work of the late **Robert Baillie** who died on 11<sup>th</sup> August having served our congregation for over 40 years as an Elder. Warm tributes were paid for his work and witness for Christ Jesus including his leadership of the Old Boys Silver Band.

In September with **St Cedma's Parish** on the opening of their new Inver Hall and with the **Salvation Army** on their new premises in Main Street.

**Welcoming** Sarah Robinson, Jim Duffin, Jenna, Mark and Bethany Linton, Emma and James Filbey and David Taggart as **communicant members** and wishing each continued blessing as they take their full place in our congregation.

With **Dave Bilborough** who led an evening of worship and song on 14<sup>th</sup> September.

**Congratulating** Rev David Kelly and his wife Lauren on the safe arrival of baby Isaiah. His new congregations of Loughmorne and Woodburn are thrilled with this addition to the manse family.

With **Jacqueline McCallum and Latin Link** as we renewed Jax's placement with First Larne for a two further years and raised over £1300 toward visa costs. In congratulating Jax on her engagement to Paul Murphy we wish them every blessing for their wedding in July. We pray for God's grace and wisdom for Jax as she shares in the Community Outreach and work of our congregation.



With **"A Magnificent Christmas Bonanza"** by the Play it by Ear Theatre Company who presented the Christmas story to children and families with lots of fun in a fresh and vibrant way.

In **Larne Football Club** at their first ever **Carol Service** on 14<sup>th</sup> December.

For the **gifts in wills** of £2871 from the Estate of Alfred Craig and £5000 from the Estate of James Nesbitt which enable our congregation to achieve so much more than we would otherwise be able to do.

For **DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES** for our congregation agreed by Session members after consultation and much work and prayer including:

- Basement redesign and refurbishment.
- Updating our Meeting House to include a more open area to the front, better access for all, improvements to seating and upgraded heating.
- Redesign and refurbishment of toilet areas on the main floor of our complex.
- Lift access to rooms 4 and 5.
- Upgrades to kitchen areas.

An initial priority, a Hearing Loop, has already been installed in our Memorial Hall. These Development Priorities are being taken forward by our Development Group led by Property Convenor Stephen Ross with Mark Campbell providing architecture services and expert guidance on regulations and design.

With so much more to highlight including the wonderful work of Rev Dr Colin McClure and of Rev Maynard Cathcart, of our Kids and Youth programmes headed up by the dynamic Amy Hunter, of Youth Alpha encouraging our young people in commitment to Jesus, of Boys Brigade, Small Groups, Study, Fellowship and Prayer groups, Christianity Explored and all that happens week by week in our First Larne family.

***As we celebrate all that God has done, we thank those who share in and lead the work and witness of our congregation. May God fill and bless each of our First Larne family as we gather together to worship and go out to serve Him, where he places us, in the year ahead.***


**Robin Tweed,**  
Clerk of Session



# Congregational Committee Report for 2019

We thank God for the devoted service of the members of the church Committee and pray that their continued involvement will be rewarding both for them and for the church.

**FINANCE :** Our **Treasury Team** was led by Jenny McKay with assistance from Joan Arnold, Glynis and Robin Alexander. Jenny, Joan and Glynis stepped down at the end of December 2019. We thank each one for their hard work and dedication. We look forward to the involvement of the new Treasury Team members, Eamonn McFerran, Treasurer, Shirley Torbitt, Assistant Treasurer, with Judith Evans and Elaine Magee and thank them for their commitment and dedication.

 Our **General account** income was more than **£14,664** less than our everyday expenditure during 2019. Our congregation are thanked once again for their faithful giving. However despite the best efforts of our Treasury team we finish the year with a deficit. Our projected budget reflects the increased costs of running our large complex and maintaining the property as well as continuing our outreach into our local community. To meet these expenses your increased generosity will be needed in 2020.



Our 2019 giving by monthly envelope and standing order together with Gift Aid did not reach our target of honour of £19 236. We will have a deficit of **£1,438.06**. **Could you help us to reach our target in 2020 with a modest increase in your giving?**

Our **Maintenance Account** giving by monthly envelope and standing order together with Gift Aid has allowed much important work maintaining and developing our complex to be completed. Despite some unexpected expenses during the year the healthy balance in this account should allow completion of some work already planned for 2020.

Our **Finance** working groups include Treasury team, Gift Aid and Counting team. These groups supervise the counting of all money collected, the claiming of Gift Aid where available and the allocation of money to our different accounts. We encourage all members to pay by Standing Order which helps with budgeting and to sign a Gift Aid claim form.

**PROPERTY :** **Property Committee** looks after the maintenance and upkeep of our buildings and property including our Manse and Ilse Court dwelling. We thank Stephen Ross for his hard work leading the Property Team and also our Development working group, and we assure him of our prayers and continued support as he undertakes these demanding roles.

**Maintenance Team:** The late Robert Baillie, John Millar, Bertie Wilson and helpers work most weekday mornings maintaining and repairing our complex as well as installing new equipment. We are very grateful for their hard work and expertise which saves our church a lot of money! Following the death of Robert Baillie, the Maintenance team have continued to complete work around the complex, but his knowledge and abilities are sadly missed. We thank all the team members who work hard to keep the many aspects of a busy church running smoothly.

## STAFF

We are blessed with our staff and ministry team led by Rev Dr Colin McClure with Pastoral Associate Rev Maynard Cathcart all of whom work hard to allow our congregation to worship and serve God well together. We are grateful to Sheila Doran our Church Administrator, William Rainey our Caretaker, Amy Hunter our Co-ordinator of Youth and Family Ministry, Jax McCallum our Community Support Worker and Dr. Stephen Reid who leads our music, ably assisted when required by Derick Jenkins and Norman Carmichael.

## REACHING OUT

As a congregation, we reach out to our community in many ways. Wee Cup of Friendship organised by Bev Moore, Larne Foodbank, GB & BB, Holiday Bible Club, Youth Week and our Community Fun Night are probably the best known examples.

**Throughout 2019 and beyond the members of your Congregational Committee continue to serve our Lord through their work and witness, managing First Larne's property and finances in a way that honours God and helps to build His kingdom and share His love.**

**May we each commit to using the gifts and talents God gives us to serve Him in the year ahead?**

**Sandy Lindsay, Secretary to Congregational Committee**

# Passing it on - Scripture Union in our Schools



Rebekah and I are Scripture Union NI's E3 Schools' Workers for East Antrim, which covers, Carrickfergus, Larne and Ballyclare. The three main aims of the 'E3 Project' are to engage with children and young people through RE lessons, assemblies and SU groups, to equip Christian staff

and pupils to be salt and light in their schools and to empower churches to get involved in their local schools.

We are part of a wider movement that is not only focused on Schools' Ministry but is also made up of three other departments – Administration, Camps and Missions and Training and Resources. Across all of these departments, our overriding aim is to make God's Good News known to children, young people and families so that they will meet with Him daily through his Word, and eventually enter into a personal relationship with Him. Everything we do is rooted in Scripture, and we keep coming back to the verses that are written in Psalm 78:1-7.

*O my people, listen to my instructions. Open your ears to what I am saying, for I will speak to you in a parable. I will teach you hidden lessons from our past— stories we have heard and known, stories our ancestors handed down to us. We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, about his power and his mighty wonders. For he issued his laws to Jacob; he gave his instructions to Israel. He commanded our ancestors to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them— even the children not yet born— and they in turn will teach their own children. So each generation should set its hope anew on God, not forgetting his glorious miracles and obeying his commands."*

We at Scripture Union love children. We love engaging with them, walking alongside them and telling them that God loves them. Children are important to us, because children are important to God. The opening verses of Psalm 78 stress the

importance of passing our faith on to our kids, of telling the next generation about the Lord. Our children are one of our most precious resources. They are the world of tomorrow. And therefore the nurture of our children must be one of our greatest priorities.

It is important that we teach our children when they are still young. The formative years of a child's life are critically important for their spiritual development. And that spiritual development takes place largely in the family and in the church. But what if children are not exposed to spiritual things at home? What if they are not brought to church? In order to engage with children, we need to be where they are. They don't have to come to church, but they do have to go to school.

Parents and grandparents have a responsibility to teach their children, to provide them with knowledge to help their development. But we all have a responsibility to tell the next generation about the 'glorious deeds of the Lord'. We must go and tell - we must seek them out. This is why, for us as SU, school's ministry is so important. In order to reach children and young people, to tell them about God, we must be where they are.

Children have the opportunity every day to learn and grow in subjects like literacy, mathematics and science. While these are important, we believe that learning about God and Jesus, about the church and Christian beliefs are of equal importance. We want there to be a space in the classroom for children and young people to open God's Word for themselves, to ask difficult questions and to explore faith. We have opportunities daily to engage with children and young people, and the reality is that some of them have never heard about God before – some of them have never even opened a Bible before. What a huge privilege and responsibility it is to introduce them to a God who sent His Son to die for them.

We deliver a series of lessons every year to P5s across the district about the miracles of Jesus. The first lesson is on the feeding of the five thousand, and it is humbling to see the reactions of children who are hearing the story for the very first time. Their eyes widen, their mouths open and they are just amazed at how Jesus was able to feed so many people with one packed lunch!





We need to share with our children the wonderful things God has done. Praiseworthy things, powerful things, things of wonder. Our children should be awestruck at God's wonderful works. So should we for that matter! We need to take the opportunities that are on our doorsteps to

share with children God's mighty deeds that are recorded in the Bible; to share with them about men and women whom God has used mightily throughout history; to share with them personal stories of how God has answered prayer in our own lives. We need to let them see the impact God has on our faith in everyday struggles and trials. Most of all, share with them what God has done through the sending of his Son Jesus to bring us salvation. Yet how can we do that if we're not there?

We are incredibly lucky that in this country we have so many opportunities to talk about God in our schools. Children all over Northern Ireland are encountering God through their teachers, support

## MODERATOR'S PRAYER WEEK

If you missed it, here's a little taster....

**PSALM 46:1-3 "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging."**

In the midst of suffering how can we enjoy God's peace? Troubles may come in the form of physical illness, persecution at work, grief, depression, anxious thoughts, disappointment, betrayal or a breakdown in a relationship. Our peace can be shattered.

We need to take heart from Psalm 46 that God is our refuge and strength as we live in a fallen world. We do not need to fear as we rest in the arms of a loving God who can give us a deep, unshakeable peace even in difficult seasons. There is a God who is above us, who is above everything but is also always with us. It is He who brings us through trials for reasons known only to Him. God knows exactly what

staff, local church volunteers and people from organisations like SUNI. God loves it when his people work together, and Rebekah and I are so thankful that we get to work alongside church staff and volunteers from 1<sup>st</sup> Larne. Together, we are able to do so much more and impact so many more children.

If you would like to find out more about what we do, or how you could partner with us (through volunteering, in prayer or financially) we would love to meet with you and tell you more of how God is moving in the schools in East Antrim.

**Caroline Sleator**



### Contact Information

Caroline Sleator

e: [caroline@suni.co.uk](mailto:caroline@suni.co.uk)

m: 0743596 3157

Rebekah Ravey:

e: [rebekah@suni.co.uk](mailto:rebekah@suni.co.uk)

m: 0748750 6751



**SCHOOLS**  
Scripture Union  
Northern Ireland

He is doing and is using our trials to transform us during the fierce storms we endure.

*Pray for:*

- *a person you know who is struggling to be content. Ask God to enable them to trust him and to find in him a peace that passes understanding.*
- *your church – that it might so embody the peace of God, that it would act like a magnet drawing in those on the periphery of your congregation and arousing their interest so that they might in turn experience this peace themselves.*
- *for believers to become agents of peace in a society where sectarianism is all too prevalent and where difference of any sort is viewed with suspicion.*
- *your work context, school or wherever you spend a good part of your day - that you might be a peacemaker and point to Jesus through your actions.*



## A postcard from the Holy Land

Our recent trip to the Holy Land was part holiday, part pilgrimage and part history lesson. We were warmly welcomed at a Palestinian Arab run hotel in Jerusalem and at a Jewish run hotel on the shore of Lake Galilee. History is ever present in Israel, as we discovered during our harrowing visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, where the suffering of the Jewish people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was graphically portrayed. Hence the security presence – but for the older members of the Group it brought back memories of our own Troubles. Still, the apartheid security wall topped by razor wire and a remote controlled machine gun were more than a little sinister.

We met children and carers from the Palestinian community at the Jeel al-Amal Boy's Home and school in Bethlehem, funded in part by the McCabe Trust. We were also hosted by the Bethlehem Rehabilitation Centre hearing of their work with injured members of the Palestinian community prevented by the Israeli military from accessing specialist medical services in Jerusalem just 5 miles away.

We were able to walk in Jesus' footsteps from the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem and along the Via Dolorosa. We enjoyed the peace and quiet of the Garden Tomb as we remembered Jesus' death and resurrection. We attended a part English, part Arabic church service in Jerusalem and shared in bible readings and the Lord's supper at key points on our pilgrimage journey.

Outside Jerusalem we floated in the Dead Sea and visited Masada fortress. In Galilee we learned from "Martha, Abraham and Sarah" about Jesus' life growing up in Nazareth village and crossed the Sea of Galilee in a small boat just like the disciples 2000 years ago.



Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives



Isabel surveying the rooftops of Jerusalem



"I luv Jerusalem" - investigating the night-life!



Bob, Neill, Heather and Sandy start the Sabbath at the Western wall



Sandy and Margaret find the lions of Judah.



So what did the travellers think of their experience? Here are a few quotes.....

- Rev. Colin did a marvellous job keeping us all together"
- It's one of those places that isn't like anywhere else
- It was a full-on trip with so many different things to see each day, but you had to do that to fit everything in - and there was still lots we didn't have time to see!
- The churches on the holy sites really were beautiful, such elaborate decoration and paintings.
- It was amazing to think that Jesus might, just possibly, have been in this exact spot.
- I found the Garden Tomb particularly emotional.
- The Dead Sea was a totally unique experience - goggles recommended to save your eyes stinging!
- It was interesting to learn a bit about the history of Israel since Bible times as this was something I knew very little about.
- The readings group members did at all the Biblical

locations really added to the spiritual aspect of the trip.

- Having Communion at the Garden Tomb and on the shore of Lake Galilee was something special.
- There was so much to see in Jerusalem, Galilee was quieter and very picturesque.
- We were looked after really well, I'm sure we all added on a pound or two with all that food!
- Our guide Kev (Kevork) was really knowledgeable, and he even understood Irish banter!
- The wildlife was fascinating, and the plant life was most interesting, such as olive trees whose roots could have been there in Jesus' time, a sycamore-type tree in Jericho that Zacchaeus "may" have climbed up, and the date palms with leaves like those the crowd would have waved at Jesus on the donkey!



A tight squeeze in "Lazarus' tomb" in Bethany.



Robert (very much alive) afloat in the Dead Sea!



The good shepherd finds two of his lost sheep!



Communion service by the shores of Lake Galilee.



The group gathered by Lake Galilee.



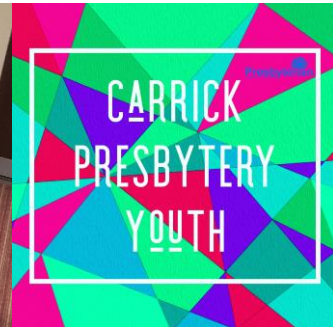


## ENGAGE : the Mod

Carrick Presbytery Youth welcomed an evening with the current Moderator Rev. William Henry on the opening day of his tour of Carrickfergus Presbytery Tour. We worshipped together, led by Greenisland Presbyterian's Youth Praise Team, and William spoke to our young people about CHOICES when it comes to enjoying God!



.....and of course we've been having our usual fun and fellowship on our regular Sunday evening meetings!



At church over the past couple of years, we have been engaging with the reality of 'Welcome Home' each Sunday. Some of you may recognise that as the section where the kids get involved with the main service each week, and yes that is right. However it is so much more than that. The whole dynamic of being Welcomed Home is that it's usually about family. You know that feeling..... you have had a LONG day at work (or school), and the moment you walk through your front door you know you can finally relax and feel safe and secure, knowing you're home! Well, that is how God wants us to view church! So that when we come into His sanctuary each Sunday, whether you're a tiny human or not so tiny, that you feel the embrace of a loving God, and in turn share that 'family feeling' with each other. So let me encourage you all, to become involved each Sunday by engaging with those around you, supporting their needs in church just as much as our own, to build each other up in Jesus' Name!



Have you ever thought about how in today's modern world, when kids have so much at their finger tips, how you can keep them connected to Faith? Or, have you ever considered the struggle that some (actually most) people have, when their kids ask them a BIG question about God? The Kitchen Table Project is designed to equip parents to inspire a faith that lasts.

We have been meeting like a 'Sunday School for Parents' to begin this conversation... to talk through the worries, fear & concerns, and the success stories too, of raising a child in church and helping them connect going to church on a Sunday, to having their own faith that will keep them steadfast in God's love no matter where they are, or what they are going through!

If you would have children from 0 to Year 7 in school, and would like to join the conversation, then please get in touch with Amy.





PCI's Youth & Children's Project for 2019-20 is "Crêcer Juntos" which is Spanish for Growing Together. You may remember that we appealed for your generosity in filling Smartie's tubes with 20p's..... well your money will be shared between this PCI project, and our own Kids & Youth Church.



At the time of going to press we are sitting at just over £200 each so a big THANK YOU to everyone who contributed. However it isn't too late to donate if you feel led to do so (speak with June Bryson to find out more)!



As one season closes and another begins, I want to thank all of our current leaders in all of our Kids & Youth ministries in First Larne. Without you they simply wouldn't happen!

We are ALL called to serve God, and there are many different ways that can be done, but if you feel like you could be connected with any of our Youth & Children's ministries, then there are LOTS of ways & opportunities for you to do so. Please speak to me for more information, but please also give this some prayerful consideration.

**Amy Hunter**

## *Toddlers Annual Party*

Every year, instead of having individual birthday parties, our Toddlers Group hold a birthday party for everyone of whatever age! This year the cake was shared around on 11<sup>th</sup> March.....



Jack and Bertie admire the balloons



Eileen carefully brings in the very important cake.

Big smiles from Lorna and Ollie.



Emma and Zoe join the fun



Little Evie enjoys her first Toddler Group party with Jan.





# FIRST LARNE ANNUAL TABLE QUIZ

PW hosted their annual table quiz on Thursday 5th March, an evening full of tricky questions and tasty tray bakes. The eventual winners were the "Allsorts" who had first pick from the table of prizes. Happily no-one went away empty-handed! Thanks as always to Hilary who set the questions. Over £200 was raised for PW funds which includes this year's special PW projects. Home PW projects are Thompson House (supported housing for male ex-offenders), Carlisle House (substance misuse treatment centre) and Gray's Court (supported living project). Our PW overseas project is supporting a Christian publishing group in Beirut, Lebanon to translate and publish a devotional book for young Arabic speaking Christian girls.



Quizmaster Hilary asks a question.



Billy, Stephen and Ina, members of the winning team the "Allsorts". Some of the team were too shy to have their photo taken!



# Let's talk about toilets !

Most people in NI, above 5 years old, will immediately turn-off at the mention of anything to do with poo or toilets. It's just not polite or maybe we are a bit squeamish. But please keep reading.

Whilst we may take our loo for granted, it's not that long since we as a society living on an island, just conveniently threw our sewage into the sea - out of sight out of mind. And it's easy to make jokes about "going behind a bush" if we are caught out on a day out in the UK or Ireland. But, shockingly, **1 in 3 people across the world don't have somewhere safe to go to the toilet - ever.** Bad sanitation is one of the world's biggest killers: it hits women, children, old and sick people hardest. The facts are stark –

- 844 million people lack access to clean safe drinking water
- Around half the people in the world have an illness caused by bad sanitation.
- Every minute, a child under the age of five dies because of dirty water and poor sanitation.

In Africa, half of young girls who drop out of school do so because they need to collect water – often from many miles away – or because the school hasn't got separate toilets for boys and girls. Not having a loo puts people at risk of being bitten by snakes as they squat in the grass and makes women and girls a target for sexual assault as they go to the toilet in the open.

Providing people with clean water and basic sanitation is one of the most cost-effective ways to release people from poverty: for every £1 spent on water and sanitation, more than £5 is returned through saved time, increased productivity and reduced health costs.

Sanitation is serious stuff. Over decades of learning, it's become clear that projects work best when local people see the need for improved sanitation – and make that change happen themselves. It's all about **dignity and self-respect.** For many communities, hearing about the link between sanitation and health is a revelation: a light bulb moment. Hygiene education on practices such as handwashing is key to behaviour change in the long term. Many have never known why diarrhoea is so common, and why their children have fallen ill or died.

Suddenly, they understand. And then they want a latrine – that they build themselves. Because a family who have built their own latrine is much more likely to use it and look after it.

Toilet Twinning is a Tear Fund supported programme which works through local partners to provide health education and sanitation. The community decides on the design and materials to be used in latrine building. This means latrines are both appropriate and affordable for them. In some places, of course, this approach isn't possible. So in conflict areas (such as parts of the DRC) or places hit by a natural disaster (such as an earthquake or typhoon), the programme does send in people with water and sanitation expertise to dig wells and build latrines which is more expensive but, overall, the average cost per household for a water and sanitation programme is about £60.

In the village of Chimbilwa in Zambia, Monica would feel ashamed when friends discovered her crouching in the bush, going to the toilet. And Monica says there was a lot of sickness before the village started building toilets. "I used to be sick for up to two weeks in a month, and sometimes, the diarrhoea was so bad that my family had to borrow an ox cart to take me to hospital. They had to sell some of our chickens to pay for medicines"

The buildings may not be as smart as we would expect in our homes -



**But toilets transform lives for whole communities.**

You can twin your toilet by donating £60. More details can be found at [toilettwinning.org](http://toilettwinning.org)



## Easter Baking!

I have always been fascinated with the science of baking and love to see my mixture being transformed into a perfectly risen cake for everyone to enjoy! This process reminds me of Jesus, who is also risen, for everyone to enjoy - "eternal life".

These moist and light Chocolate Muffins are an indulgent treat for Easter and ideal to bring on a picnic, that's if the weather holds up! They are also delicious as a Sunday dessert- just warm them up (very gently) in the microwave and serve with ice cream and lots of the warmed chocolate ganache!

Arlene

### Chocolate Muffins with chocolate ganache

Makes: 12

250g plain flour; 200g caster sugar  
125g chocolate chips ; 45g cocoa powder  
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 eggs ; 200g plain yoghurt  
120ml milk ; 120ml vegetable oil  
40g chocolate chips



- 1 Preheat oven to 200 C / Gas 6. Line a muffin tray with paper cases.
- 2 Combine flour, caster sugar, 125g chocolate chips, cocoa powder and bicarbonate of soda in a large bowl. Whisk egg, yoghurt, milk and vegetable oil in another bowl until smooth; pour into chocolate mixture and stir until mixture is just mixed. Fill paper muffin cases 3/4 full and sprinkle with remaining chocolate chips.
- 3 Bake in preheated oven until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Cool in the tray for 5 minutes before removing to cool completely on a wire cooling rack.

### For the chocolate ganache:

150ml double cream ; 150g plain chocolate, broken into pieces

To make the icing: measure the cream and chocolate into a bowl and carefully melt over a pan of hot water over a low heat. Stir until glossy and fully melted, then set aside to cool and thicken up. Place in a piping bag and pipe onto the muffins. (Gently warm the ganache if you wish to use it as a chocolate sauce).

**Cooks Tip:** Decorate with chocolate shapes or try topping with chopped pistachio nuts.

  
**Bellahill**  
Cookery | Campervan Weddings

## ATTENTION ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS !

Our 2020 Church Calendar featured photographs of local scenes. If you are holidaying in Northern Ireland this summer, please consider sharing any appropriate photos for inclusion in the 2021 calendar. Notable landmarks or picturesque scenes would be very welcome. Photographs should be of a high quality, not blurred or out of focus in any part of the image and be in electronic format eg jpeg. Please include the location, as that may not be obvious, and send your photos to the Church Office e-mail ([admin@firstlarne.org.uk](mailto:admin@firstlarne.org.uk)) before Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September. Depending on the numbers received we will use as many as possible and hold any in reserve for future years if needed.



Happy Holidays and remember your camera!

PS : The same appeal can be made for photos for the front page of the Bridge News - Ed.



# In troubled times we need to smile.....

On a sunny Sunday afternoon, two young church members were going door to door to invite people to visit their services. When they knocked on one door, it was immediately clear the woman who answered was not happy to see them.

She told them in no uncertain terms that she did not want to hear their message, and before they could say anything more, she slammed the door in their faces.

To her surprise, however, the door did not close; in

fact, it bounced back open. She tried again, really putting her back into it, and slammed it again with the same result - the door bounced back open.

Convinced these rude young people were sticking their foot in her door, she reared back to give it a slam that would teach them a lesson. Just then, one of them said quietly:

"Ma'am, before you do that again, you really need to move your cat."



## The Indispensable Man?

"Sometimes when you are feeling important,  
Sometimes when your ego's in bloom,  
Sometimes when you take it for granted  
You're the best qualified man in the room,

You can splash all you please when you enter  
You can stir up the water galore.  
But stop and, in a moment,  
It looks just the same as before.

Sometimes when you feel that  
your going,  
Would leave an unfillable hole;  
Just follow this simple instruction  
And see how it humbles your soul.



Now the moral of this is quite  
simple,  
Do the best that you can.  
Be proud of yourself, but remember  
There is no indispensable man."

Take a bucket and fill it with water  
Put your hands into it up to the wrists,  
Pull them out and the hole that remains  
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.

.....or woman?

## Oops! – Church Bulletin Blunders

Believe it or not the following appeared in church bulletins or were announced at church services.....

- Ladies, don't forget the nearly new sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.
- Don't let worry kill you off – let the Church help.
- Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again', giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
- This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mr Lewis to come forward and lay an egg at the front of the church.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a crèche downstairs.
- The Minister will preach his farewell message, after which the choir will sing 'We thank you, Lord'.
- Mr Irvine Benson and Miss Jessie Carter were married on 24<sup>th</sup> November in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
- This evening at 7pm there will be carol singing in the park across from the Church. Bring hat and gloves and come prepared to sin.
- Potluck supper Sunday at 5pm – prayer and medication to follow.
- The church will host an evening of fine dining, super entertainment and gracious hostility.
- At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What is Hell?' Come early and listen to our choir practice.
- The ladies of the women's group have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.
- The service this morning: 'Jesus Walks on the Water.' The sermon tonight: 'Searching for Jesus.'

## CHURCH REGISTER

### BAPTISMS

Harriet Lucie Hall-Robinson	10 Chestnut Way	24 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
Kerris Anne Hodge	59 Greenland Crescent	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2019
Riley Connor	84 The Beeches	9 <sup>th</sup> February 2020

### DEATHS

Iris Kley	16 Pound Green Court	25 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
Ivan Andrew Armour	10 Sallagh Park	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2019
John McIlroy	112 Carrickfergus Road	5 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
James Leitch	14 Britannia Crescent	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2019
Elizabeth Kell	Broadways PNH	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
Kenneth Craig	40 Greenland Crescent	6 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
William John Wharry	68 Glenvale Park	12 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Robert John McColm	12 McGarel Gardens	16 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Irene Winifred Apsley	310 Old Glenarm Road	17 <sup>th</sup> March 2020

## Now there's a thought (1)

There was a song a few years ago with a chorus.....

"Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble  
When you're perfect in every way.  
I can't wait to look in the mirror  
'Cause I get better lookin' each day"

Tongue in cheek and quite funny, but we are all that strange mix of self confidence and self doubt, vanity and modesty, often wanting to be impressive whilst trying to appear to be humble. But what is **true humility**?

**"Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. The attitude you should have is the one Christ Jesus had.."**

**Philippians 2 v 3-5**

This Easter consider Jesus' actions during Passion week (John Ch 12 – 19)

- Riding into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey, not an impressive horse or a chariot.
- Washing his disciples dirty, sweaty and probably smelly feet.
- Calmly telling Judas to "Be quick about what you are doing".
- Comforting and praying for his disciples.
- Healing the ear of Malchus.
- Enduring slapping, being spat upon, stripped, mocked and whipped, yet having the courage to stand and tell the Sanhedrin and Pilate the truth.
- Ultimately being crucified, although innocent.

**"He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God. Instead of this, of His own free will He gave up all He had and took the nature of a servant. He became like man and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – His death on the cross"**

**Philippians 2 v 6-8**

## Now there's a thought (2)

Whoever goes to the Lord for safety,  
Whoever remains under the protection of  
the Almighty, can say to Him,

**"You are my defender and protector.  
You are my God in You I trust"**

He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers and  
from all deadly diseases.

He will cover you with His wings;  
You will be safe in His care;  
His faithfulness will protect and defend you

**Psalms 91 v 1-4**



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY ?

This page in the Bridge News would normally be filled with details of upcoming services and events. However the coronavirus pandemic means there is little certainty as to when many events will be held. The events below are planned but may be subject to change.

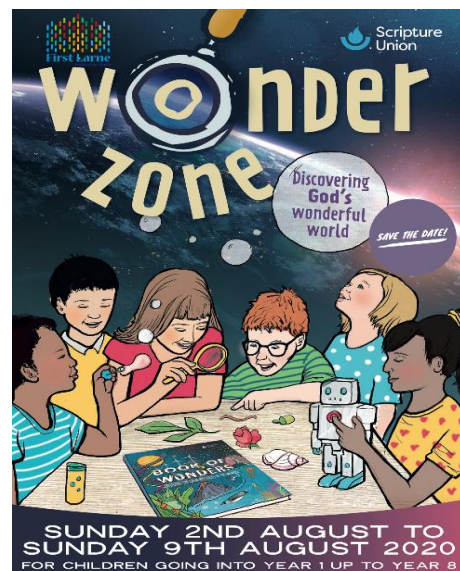


YOU ARE INVITED to our ALL WEATHER PICNIC! This is a Church event for EVERYONE to be involved! So all you have to do is bring your own picnic (and maybe a little something extra to share) & blanket or seat (whichever your prefer)! We'll let you know the date closer to the time.



Family Small Group will be a fun, engaging, 'messy church' style evening... once a quarter starting soon!

Keep on the look-out for more details closer to the time (speak to Amy for more information)!



Connecting Science & Faith is this year's Holiday Bible Club theme. Planning has begun, so if you feel led to be involved (in whatever way you can) then speak with Amy.



**Christian Aid have advised that house-to-house collections scheduled for 10-16 May are cancelled, and events for Christian Aid week are postponed.** The possibility of holding house-to-house collections later in the year, perhaps in September, is being explored.

Christian Aid Week is the charity's single-most important fundraiser each year and the impact of not holding it in its usual form is significant. Your support for vulnerable people supported by Christian Aid projects worldwide at this time is still needed and very welcome. More information and ways of making a donation can be found at [www.christianaid.ie](http://www.christianaid.ie)

## RACE DOWN THE LAGAN

20TH JUNE

**Form a team -**  
crew a dragon boat

**Raise sponsorship -**  
change lives in Africa

**Race other teams -**  
have an amazing day!

**REGISTER YOUR BOAT AT**  
[www.abaana.org/events](http://www.abaana.org/events)



**Abaana** have organized a fun day out racing dragon boats at Cutter's Wharf on the Lagan in June and have asked if First Larne could enter a team. To do this we would need 12-20 people aged over 16. Although previous experience might be useful it is not essential. There will be an instructor provided to coach and steer the boat. Apart from a bit of craic the idea is to raise funds for a new school in Uganda, so Abaana are looking for each participant to pay £20 to cover costs and raise £50 in sponsorship.

Interested? Speak to the Editor

On a more positive and certain note : - Many thanks to all those who donated to the PCI World Development Appeal, which raised £2146 including £357 Gift Aid, and to the Presbyterian Children's Society Appeal, which raised £986.50. Special thanks to all the collectors who made this possible.

# First Larne Baptisms

"Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me" Mark 9 v 37



Harriet Lucie Hall-Robinson, pictured with mum and dad, David and Nicola, and Rev McClure, was baptised on 24<sup>th</sup> November.



Riley Connor, pictured with mum and dad, Amy and Christopher, and Rev McClure, was baptised on 9<sup>th</sup> February .



CONGRATULATIONS to Robert Boyle, a member of 1<sup>st</sup> Larne BB since the age of 5, who received his Gold Duke of Edinburgh award at Hillsborough Castle from radio presenter, Rebecca McKinney. Prince Edward was in attendance.



Kerris Anne Hodge, pictured with mum and dad, Clare and Neil, big sister Kadie and Rev McClure, was baptised on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

## AND FINALLY.....

Young Ben had been at Sunday School for two years and had learnt quite a lot. Indeed he was a star pupil, so his teacher, Susan, was quite proud of her success in passing on bible knowledge.

One day Susan noticed Ben was looking puzzled. As she continued the lesson the look on Ben's face became not just puzzled but a little angry. Susan stopped and asked gently "Ben what's wrong?"

"Can I ask a question?" Ben asked. "Of course" replied Susan.

"Well, the Bible says that the children of Israel left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, and that the children of Israel conquered the Promised Land and then the children of Israel built the temple in Jerusalem....isn't that right?"

"Yes...." said Susan hesitantly. "Well done Ben for remembering all those lessons".

Ben fixed her with a stern gaze.....

"Didn't the grown-ups ever do anything?"

First Larne Presbyterian Church, Inver Road, Larne Tel 028 28269968

Minister : Rev Dr Colin D McClure Tel 028 28272441 Mobile : 0798 4030881

E-mail : [admin@firstlarne.org.uk](mailto:admin@firstlarne.org.uk) [www.firstlarne.org.uk](http://www.firstlarne.org.uk) [www.facebook.com/Firstlarne](https://www.facebook.com/Firstlarne)