

Minister's Word

From Rev Lindsay Blair

What strange times we have been living in recently with the onslaught of Coronavirus throughout our world. Even just a few months ago none of us could have predicted how our entire planet could be brought to its knees by this deadly virus. It has been a total shock. Our hearts especially go out to all those families who have lost loved ones together with those who remain ill in hospital. We also must express our gratitude to the armies of staff in our hospitals who have worked tirelessly together with all other frontline staff who have given so much.

It is likely that life is not going to be the same for a very long time, if ever. There is much trepidation as we begin to consider how to go forwards, not least in Church. In many ways our weekly fellowship has been decimated. We all miss that regular meeting with our fellow members, not to mention the upbuilding of our faith and all that makes up our regular corporate worship. However as one recent poster has put it: *"The Building may be closed, but the church is still open!"* I would want to thank all those people who have continued in quiet and unseen ways to make sure that the ministry of our congregation continues. Over this time there have been some of our members in hospital and sadly some of our elderly members have passed away, which has been difficult for their families. Virtually all pastoral needs continue to be dealt with over the phone and we have sought to keep in touch with our senior and vulnerable members. Anyone who needs help should contact their district elder or myself. We may not have your telephone number, so please do contact us if there is a need.

At this time, I would especially ask you to pray for God's hand in all the difficult challenges that we are going to have to face going forwards; in family life; in all our different spheres of education; work and leisure; for business life and industry; those involved in government; not to mention the challenge felt in nations across the entire world. There is also the challenge we are going to face in Church life, especially with the uncertainty here as to how everything is going to get started up and proceed. Please pray that the Lord will clearly guide everyone who is in a position of responsibility. Please do especially pray for our Elders as they seek to know the best way forward in the coming months.

Just a few weeks ago I was listening to the Radio Ulster Sunday sequence programme. The person being interviewed was considering the challenging effects of Coronavirus. He quoted a hymn, written by a Robert Keene back in the 18th Century entitled "How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord" I would especially quote verses 2, 3 & 4 where we read these words:

*"Fear not, I am with you, O be not dismayed; for I am your God, and will still give you aid;
I'll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand, upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.*

*"When through the deep waters I call you to go, the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless, and sanctify to you your deepest distress.*

*"When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie, my grace, all-sufficient, shall be your supply;
the flame shall not hurt you; I only design your dross to consume and your gold to refine.*

The sentiments expressed by the hymnwriter are taken straight from the prophecy of Isaiah Chapters 41 and 43, where we read these verses:

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." (Isaiah 43:2)

This is an apt word for us all at this time, the Lord promising that he will never leave or forsake his children. I therefore would encourage you to hold fast to him, as he promises to hold fast to you. Do pray that the Lord will lead and guide us all into a new tomorrow that will be bright with hope and his blessing.

My thanks to everyone for all your on-going support and an especial thanks to all those who carry heavy responsibilities at this time.

Yours sincerely,

Lindsay Blair

Sunday Services

Please also note that in the interim where we are having no normal weekly Church Service; you can go on-line to access **Faughanvale Presbyterian Church's Facebook Sunday Service** (also available at www.faughanvalepresbyterian.org). Also, our Moderator, Rev Dr William Henry has also been making on-line services available for PCI – See www.presbyterianireland.org/news

Also see **Announcements** & further updates together with **Let's Pray** Prayer Points on www.faughanvalepresbyterian.com web page & Faughanvale Presbyterian Youtube Channel & Facebook page.

Limited Church Opening

The Kirk Session met last week, by Zoom, and have decided that the Church Building will be open on Monday evenings from 7pm – 8.30pm. This is to give members the opportunity to leave off FWO or other donations etc. and will initially be manned by the Elders. This will commence from Monday 1st June 7.00-8.30pm

Church Finances

I hope that you and your family are safe and well. While we appreciate that for all of us at present there are more pressing matters, I have been asked to bring to your attention the continuing needs to provide income for the church. Although services and all other activities are currently suspended, most of the routine expenditure incurred by the congregation remains unabated and the bills have to be paid. However, without income from FWO and Maintenance Account envelopes, the relatively small amount of reserve funds available will diminish very quickly and there is a real possibility that there will be insufficient funds to meet our commitments in the not too distant future.

We appreciate that many members of the congregation will have greatly reduced income during this emergency and that many members will simply not be able to contribute as before. However, inasmuch as you are able, we would appeal to you to (preferably) make contributions by Standing Order direct to the congregation's bank account (if you are not already contributing in this way) or consider making periodic payments online or by forwarding a cheque (perhaps reflecting contributions you would normally have made through weekly envelopes) or to continue to fill your weekly envelopes so that the congregation's funds can be replenished as quickly as possible when we are able to meet again.

If you would like to set up a Standing Order or make a payment online, the bank details that you need are:

Danske Bank

Account Name: Faughanvale Presbyterian Church

Sort Code: 95-03-83

Account Number: 72786125

If you need any assistance, please contact either the Treasurer, Sammie Cochrane (telephone 07840 679538, email cochrane4@btinternet.com) or myself (telephone 0771815 3848, email evans341@btinternet.com).

Alternatively, if you wish to forward a cheque, please sent it to Sammie Cochrane at 293 Clooney Road, Limavady, BT49 9JE

Trevor Evans

Congregational Secretary

NI Proposed Abortion Regulations: The UK Government's vote on abortion regulations in Northern Ireland planned to proceed on 14th May has been put on hold. Please pray that serious reconsideration will be given to this very important matter.

Coronavirus – The Global Impact – PCI Response

Coronavirus knows no borders and is having a growing impact globally with more than 3.5 million people infected and 250,000 having died. It is the poorest countries that are most vulnerable in this pandemic and the outcome could be catastrophic within a matter of months if action is not taken now. PCI's Global Mission Standing Committee has approved the release of £60,000 (€68,118) towards the emergency response of PCI's relief and development partners, Christian Aid and Tearfund, and to partner churches and organisations. Aware of the significant economic challenges being faced here at home during this crisis, it has been decided that a Moderator's Appeal in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic is not being launched at this time, but this will be given further consideration later in the year. If, however, anyone would like to give more immediately, please do so, as you feel led and are able, through the Coronavirus Emergency Appeals of PCI's relief and development partners' by going to their websites: www.christianaid.ie or www.tearfund.org Please also be encouraged to pray for our partners, for all those with whom they are working on the ground, and upon whom COVID-19 is impacting most severely, beyond the shores of Ireland.

Unfortunately, no pastoral visitation is currently allowed in the hospital, nursing homes or member's homes. However, if you have any pastoral needs, please contact **Rev Lindsay Blair**, Tel 028 71810255 or lblair@presbyterianireland.org or please contact your district elder.

Children's Day

Please note, Children's Day would normally have been happening in June. We do plan to have a special Sunday Service for the children on-line in the coming weeks – Please watch this space and you will hear more.

Children and Youth Resources

Scripture Union

<https://www.facebook.com/ScriptureUnionNI> - See Primary Sessions Who us Jesus etc & Post Primary Sessions – Living Free Plus family devotions etc.

CEF

<https://www.cefonline.com/covid19/>

<https://www.cefonline.com/blog/>

Illustrated Ministry – Colouring in etc.

<https://www.illustratedministry.com/blog/>

Community Support and Food Parcels

During the lockdown, Eglinton Churches Together, Eglinton Community Centre and some other local volunteers have distributed a small number of food boxes, provided by Derry City & Strabane Council. These were intended primarily for those who received a Shielding Letter from their GP (i.e. those deemed most vulnerable due to underlying medical conditions), and were not automatically given to all those over the age of 70. Anyone still needing help should contact one of the co-ordinators listed on the community leaflet or enquire with your elder.

Church Records

Deaths

Tom Patton	17th December 2019
Elsie Heywood	25th December 2019
Mary McClements	29th December 2019
Billy Coulter	30th December 2019
Naomi Ross	21st January 2020
Irene Foster	8th March 2020
Sam Haslett	1st April 2020
Maisie Patterson	12th April 2020
George Bell	22nd April 2020

Easy Fundraising

With many people now buying more online, if you have not already signed up to Easy Fundraising, please consider doing this now. We have already raised almost £150 through this scheme but only 21 members of the congregation have signed up so far. You could ask family and friends to sign up as well.

Easy Fundraising is designed to let you shop online as usual but at the same time raise funds for the church – **at no extra cost.**

The are some 4,000 retailers in the scheme including Sainsburys, Amazon ASOS, Booking.com, etc who give the church a donation every time you shop with them through this website

To raise funds for the church in this way, there are just 7 easy steps:

Go to easyfundraising.org.uk

Click on "Search for a cause"

Enter "Faughanvale Presbyterian Church" and hit "GO"

Go to "Join"

Create an account – just follow the simple on-screen instructions

Go into "Search for a retailer"

Find your chosen retailer, then shop as normal.

ONCE YOU ARE REGISTERED, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS EVERY TIME.