



Second Presbyterian Church Comber

Vacancy Convener: Rev Alan Johnston
Clerk of Session: Mr Gary Dalzell
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NI Charity Number: NIC105165

March 2021

Since the last electronic update was sent out, much has changed. We have entered a further period of lockdown and our dear friend and Minister, Rev Roy Mackay, has retired to enjoy some well-deserved family time.

We have entered a vacancy situation and are delighted to have Rev Alan Johnston, currently the Minister in Killinchy Presbyterian Church as our convener.

The final edition of SCOPE and the 2019 Yearbook Most have been distributed to households and most recently, you will have received, through the post, a copy of 'For Now' and a short explanatory note.

Sadly, in this current lockdown, opportunities to meet in person or through pastoral visitation do not exist but it is our prayer that, as time moves on, things will revert to some level of normality, albeit a different normality.

Dear Members,

The following verses come from HEBREWS Chapter 10: Verses 19 – 25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

In today's wired world, everyone is getting connected. They have e-mail addresses, mobile numbers, and work numbers, text messages, WhatsApp, messenger etc. But no matter how connected we are getting technologically; we are getting less and less connected to the people around us.

Part of that has to do with the pandemic we have endured for a year now.

You and I were not made to live that way. The Bible says in Genesis 2:18, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" You were made for relationships. You were made for connections. There is a universal need to belong.

From the moment we are born, we long for the warmth of loving other people. There is a desire to belong and to be accepted by other people. There is a need to connect at the deepest level.

The Bible has a word for that: it is called fellowship. Fellowship is extremely important for one reason: we get discouraged. Life has a way of wearing us down.

Proverbs 17:22 says, *“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.”*

There are going to be times that we have a broken spirit. There are going to be times where we just do not have much strength.

Now, when we get discouraged, what do we do?

We complain. We feel sorry for ourselves. Sometimes we allow ourselves to get bitter. Sometimes we are so discouraged that we stop engaging with our church. It is ironic that we do this because times of discouragement are the times that we most need to be the church.

There is a book in the Bible that has a lot to say about encouragement. It is the book of Hebrews. This book was written to Jewish Christians who were probably undergoing fierce persecution. It appears that many of them were ready to give up the struggle, and to go back to their old way of life. It was a group of people who were struggling with discouragement.

As we begin to sense the arrival of spring and a thawing of winter so too do we sense an end to the restrictions and the pandemic. What this should mean for each of us is once again a greater opportunity to re-engage with those in our church fellowship. So, I want to encourage you to take some time to prepare your hearts and minds for that time when we can be back together again. Prepare to be encouraged but perhaps more importantly, prepare to be an encourager to those around you for in doing this we fulfil God’s desire for us as a congregation.

In His Service

Alan Johnston

Midweek Bible Study

The Midweek Bible Study continues virtually on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month. There will be a meeting on Thursday 11th March followed by an Easter break until the next session on Thursday 22nd April. The present study is the Gospel of John. Midweek Bible Study is available via an email link to a video recording. If you would like to receive this, please email Mr Ron Laird: rjl@linccd.plus.com

Gary

Dear Member,

As we are quickly moving towards Easter, I hope you are surviving the present lock down situation, especially as we are beginning to see signs of hope within the current crisis.

Within the Church obviously the current restrictions have affected us greatly, not only within our worship services, but also in the day-to-day business of keeping Church life going. One of the biggest handicaps has been the rather elongated lines of communication in obtaining agreement and consent on various issues and hence the longer time frames to resolve various points.

Since the New Year however, I am pleased to inform you of the following progress:

- Work has now been completed as to the 'contract extension' for our Youth and Family Worker. This now means it becomes a permanent position. The necessary contract papers have been submitted to Presbytery and I am pleased to inform you have now been passed and sent to the Linkage Commission.
- With regard to the Vacancy, the necessary Presbytery Papers have now been completed. These are presently out to the members of Kirk Session for comment and agreement to pass on to the Presbytery Vacancy Commission. Once these papers are agreed and accepted by Presbytery it then means we can move to the next stage of the process with Linkage Commission.

Hopefully, you will see that things are progressing, albeit at a slower pace than in more normal times.

Regards and blessings

Gary Dalzell
Clerk of Session

Postscript:

By the time you are reading this letter, you may well have heard through the grapevine, we have received permission from Church House to resume Worship Services from Good Friday. Therefore, it has been the Standing Commission of Kirk Session's decision to resume our in-person Sunday Worship services on Easter Sunday. This will, however, still be in the restricted form as before the last lock down, requiring pre-booking with numbers attending in line with the social distancing guidelines and other health and safety considerations. You will find the details in the article which follows: 'Together again for worship'.

Together again for worship

On the afternoon of Monday 15th March 2021, the leaders of the main churches in Northern Ireland met with the First and Deputy First Ministers. Both the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland attended.

On Tuesday afternoon the PCI General Council Standing Committee met and received a report of the meeting with the Executive Ministers.

The PCI General Council Standing Committee, acting with the delegated authority of the General Council and General Assembly, therefore agreed that in-person gatherings for services of worship could resume in all PCI congregations in Northern Ireland from Friday 2nd April 2021 onwards. However, the decision as to the actual start date has been left to the individual Kirk Sessions to make a judgement on what is most appropriate in their local situation.

The Standing Commission of the Kirk Session of Second Presbyterian Church Comber met on Thursday evening, 18th March 2021 and agreed that there would be an in-person service of worship in the Meeting House on Easter Sunday morning, 4th April 2021 at 11.30am.

In parallel with this and, following PCI guidelines, there will be a separate Sunday morning ministry for the children **of those attending worship**.

People wishing to attend worship on Easter Sunday should register between Sunday evening 28th March at 6.00pm and Tuesday evening 30th March at 6.00pm following the procedures outlined in the initial Back to Church communication and copied below:

1. Send an email to: registration@secondcomber.co.uk
In the email, please include the names of all family members wishing to attend on Sunday morning specifying who will attend the worship service in the Meeting House and who will be attending the parallel Children's Ministry. This is important for planning purpose and to ensure compliance with all social distancing requirements. **Please include a contact telephone number.**
2. **If you do not have an email account** (and only if you do not) you may register by phoning the Congregational Secretary, **Heather Laird**. (**Contact details at end of this update**)

On Sunday 11th April 2021 there will be an in-person Family Service at 11.30am but no separate Children's Ministry in parallel.

The Standing Commission will meet again on 15th April 2021 to review the way forward following the next update from the NI Executive.

Holy Week Services

As in previous years, plans are underway for the United Holy Week Services in our town. In these unprecedented times, the services will be virtual and will be led as follows:

Monday

Jesus Meets Us in Our Anger

First Presbyterian Church Comber
Rev Grant Connor

Tuesday

Jesus Meets Us in Our Sorrow

Second Presbyterian Church Comber
Mr Gary Dalzell

Wednesday

Jesus Meets Us in Our Distress

Comber Methodist Church
Mrs Nicky Hazley

Thursday

Jesus Meets Us in Our Isolation

St Mary's Church of Ireland
Rev Sam Johnston

Friday

Jesus Meets Us in Our Death

Individual Church Services
Second Presbyterian Church Comber
Mr Robert Dalzell & Mr Gary Dalzell

Please read the additional article on Together Again for Worship and watch the Church announcements for further details of these services and Easter worship.

Girl's Brigade

As we have been unable to meet in person, some of our officers have been keeping the girls engaged through virtual means.

Recently our explorers were tasked with making a bird feeder for their gardens using a plastic bottle and some of you may have seen examples of their amazing efforts on our Youth at Second Facebook page.

The Junior girls are planning another Zoom call which will include a scavenger hunt and a Bible story.

The Senior girls have been enjoying monthly Zoom calls and have been doing some crafts, baking and of course, the now popular Zoom quizzes!

Our incredibly talented Brigaders had a cupcake baking competition with Sarah Ewart winning Best Design, Rachel Boal, Best Bake and Emma Lindsay being Highly Commended. The judges were extremely disappointed not to be able to taste the attractive bakes.

Many of the officers and girls have joined a GB wide skipping challenge to raise money for Tiny Life. Further details on this can be found on the Youth at Second Facebook Page. If you keep an eye on this, you might even see a few video clips of our very fit officers.

During these strange times, we want to keep the girls as engaged as possible and the support and prayers of the congregation and beyond are much appreciated.

The GB Cup Cake Competition – Winning Entries



Best Design

Sarah Ewart



Best Bake

Rachel Boal

Highly Commended

Emma Lindsay



Boys' Brigade

All sections of our BB Company have been remarkably busy in recent months with many taking part in the BBNI Six in Six Challenge where BBNI are setting six challenges over six months for boys in all three sections.

Alongside this, we have our own programmes to engage with as many of our boys as possible.

Anchor Boys are taking part in an 'Anchor Boys @ Home Programme with fortnightly videos to accompany the packs put together by their leaders.

The older boys are taking part in Zoom calls with different activities each time they meet.

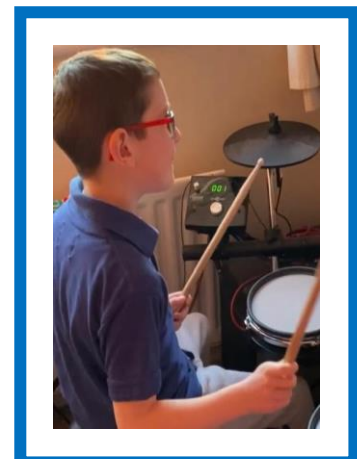
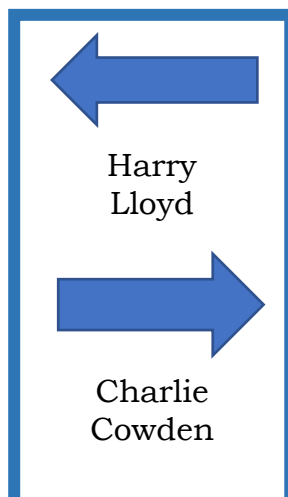
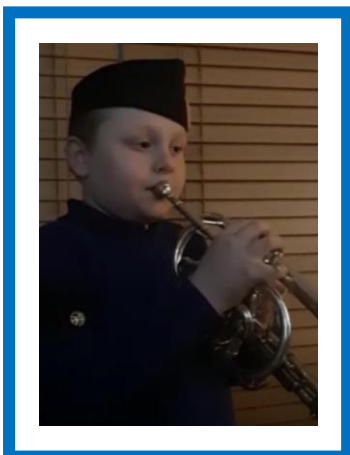
The Boys' Brigade NI District ran three musical competitions throughout January to kick start BB activities for 2021. For the first time this competition went virtual and two of our Junior Section boys took part, Charlie Cowden, playing the drums and Harry Lloyd playing the Cornet. Both boys were terrific, and Harry received a Highly Commended certificate for his rendition of 'Love, Love Changes Everything.' Well done to both boys!

One of the highlights of the BB year is Pancake Tuesday when all sections make and eat pancakes. This year, the boys were sent a recipe and asked to make their own pancakes at home and boys from across all sections (and leaders!) sent photographs of their variations. There is a video on our Youth at Second Facebook page which gives a real flavour of the activity but for those who do not do social media, a couple of photos are included.

The Company Section boys took up the challenge to create a 'stop motion animation'. These were amazing and again, the videos of their animations are available on Facebook.

Keep an eye on the Youth at Second Facebook page and website to see what is coming up!

Finally, huge congratulations to Roy Ferguson who has just recently completed his Queens Badge.





Pancake Tuesday



BOYS
BRIGADE



Youth and Children's Ministry

Sunday Morning Ministry to Children

We continue to use our Google Classroom for stories, songs, and activities for the children from Ignite and Lightship on a Sunday morning.

These are linked to the on-line children's talk, which is an integral part of our on-line Sunday morning service.

Of course, this is not the same as being together with the children, but we are delighted that they do share photographs of some of their crafts and other activities. We have even received videos of some singing complete with the actions.

We are really looking forward to being able to meet with them again soon.

Youth Fellowship

Youth Fellowship has continued to meet; we were so thankful for a couple of 'in person' meetings just before Christmas. However, since the new year all meetings have been via Zoom.

We have had fairly consistent attendance of 12-15 young people every fortnight for youth fellowship. In the weeks in between meetings we have set challenges, including a scavenger hunt around the town, and we have played some online games together.

We have even used the circumstances to try different means of being creative, in the run up to Valentine's Day we used zoom to make a video themed around God's unfailing, never ending love, by 'passing' hearts virtually to each other. (If you have not seen it, check the Youth at Second Facebook page)

We long to be together in fellowship again, but in the meantime, we are thankful for alternative means of fellowship.

Crossfire and Crossfire Plus

Crossfire has continued to engage with the children and young people in much the same way as our Sunday morning ministry to the children but now that we have a Church Zoom account, they are using this to meet together virtually on alternate weeks.

This has proved to be a great success and is being enjoyed by the children, their parents, the young people, and the leaders.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE: CALLING ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As we will be unable to meet this year to celebrate Easter, we are inviting our children and young people (Ignite, Lightship, Crossfire, YF, GB, BB etc.) to a drive through in the Church Carpark on **Friday evening 26th March between 6.00pm and 7.00pm**. You will be directed (in your car) towards the Church garage and a leader will pass an Easter pack through the car window.

This will contain an age-appropriate Easter story/reflection, some craft for the younger folks and of course, an Easter treat!

Men's Ministry

Men's Ministry continues a monthly broadcast on the 1st Tuesday of the month. We are currently looking at the meaning of various words in theology and how they shape our faith.

To access this ministry simply email Mr. Ron Laird: rjl@linccd.plus.com for the necessary access links.

Women's Ministry

We have been delighted to present the 2020/21 programme of meetings for the PW online and through Facebook and really appreciate the encouraging feedback received.

During March, free copies of a 'Mini' Wider World will be distributed to those who normally receive the magazine.

The 'Refresh' Women's Conference which had been scheduled to take place on Saturday 24th April 2021 has been postponed. It is hoped that this conference will now take place in March 2022.

We would like to encourage you to join 'Connected' our WhatsApp group to enjoy some fun and fellowship and most importantly, to feel connected in these unusual times.

Contact details available through weekly announcements.

COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics

Following the success of the Flu Vaccination Clinic in October, The Surgery in Comber asked if they might use our premises again for COVID-19 vaccination clinics. The Standing Commission of Kirk Session were delighted to agree to this and to be able to reach out to support our local community in this very practical way.

To date, there have been three busy clinics and a further clinic is planned for the coming week.

Sincere thanks to the members of Standing Commission and Committee who have managed the car park and assisted those attending.

The Presbyterian Children's Society

Dear Member,

Very many thanks to the members of our Church who donated to the Children's Society in 2020.

This was done by bank transfer or by the majority of people leaving donations into our home as collectors were not allowed to call at your homes due to COVID-19.

The response was terrific and the amount for 2020 was £3150 compared with £3304.30 in 2019.

The Children's Society is most grateful for such a large amount in such a difficult year as am I and for your effort of getting your donations to our home.

With thanks

Joyce Courtenay

Thank You from World Development and Mission

The World Development and Mission Committee send their grateful and heartfelt thanks to Mary Scates and Roberta Watson for the gift of £3000 from the Drama Group from the sale of face masks. This has entailed a lot of hard work and commitment for them.

The funds will be given to the Moderator's Special Appeal to help vaccinate and alleviate COVID-19 in Third World countries.

The funds will be distributed through Christian Aid and Tear Fund.

Should anyone in the congregation wish to support this Special Appeal, please send your donations in the usual way to the Congregational Treasurer, Mr Roy Courtenay or contact Mrs Mary McIlveen.

Deaths

It is with regret that we refer to the deaths of the following members of our Congregation:

Mr William Robert (Roy) Stevenson:

Dermott Crescent who died on 13th January 2021. Roy is survived by his wife Marion and son Alan.

Mrs Margaret Smyth:

Lower Crescent who died on Sunday 7th March. Margaret is survived by her son John.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR VOTING MEMBERS

In the very near future, those who are eligible to vote within the congregation will be receiving, by post, the 2021 'Voters List'. Due to the current restrictions, the usual format of displaying this list within the church on two consecutive Sundays, cannot go ahead because the forthcoming return to worship is seen as being restricted for a congregation of our size. The Clerk of Presbytery has advised that the normal process can be replaced, in these unprecedented times, using the postal system and listing voters by name only.

Once received, any objections should be forwarded in writing to the Clerk of Session within 14 days of receipt.

The update of the Voters List is important for vital decisions which will need to be made by the congregation during the vacancy.

Contact Details:

Clerk of Session

Gary Dalzell

Tel: 028 9187 3744

Congregational Secretary

Heather Laird

Tel: 028 9187 3861

Congregational Treasurer

Roy Courtenay

Tel: 028 9187 2664