

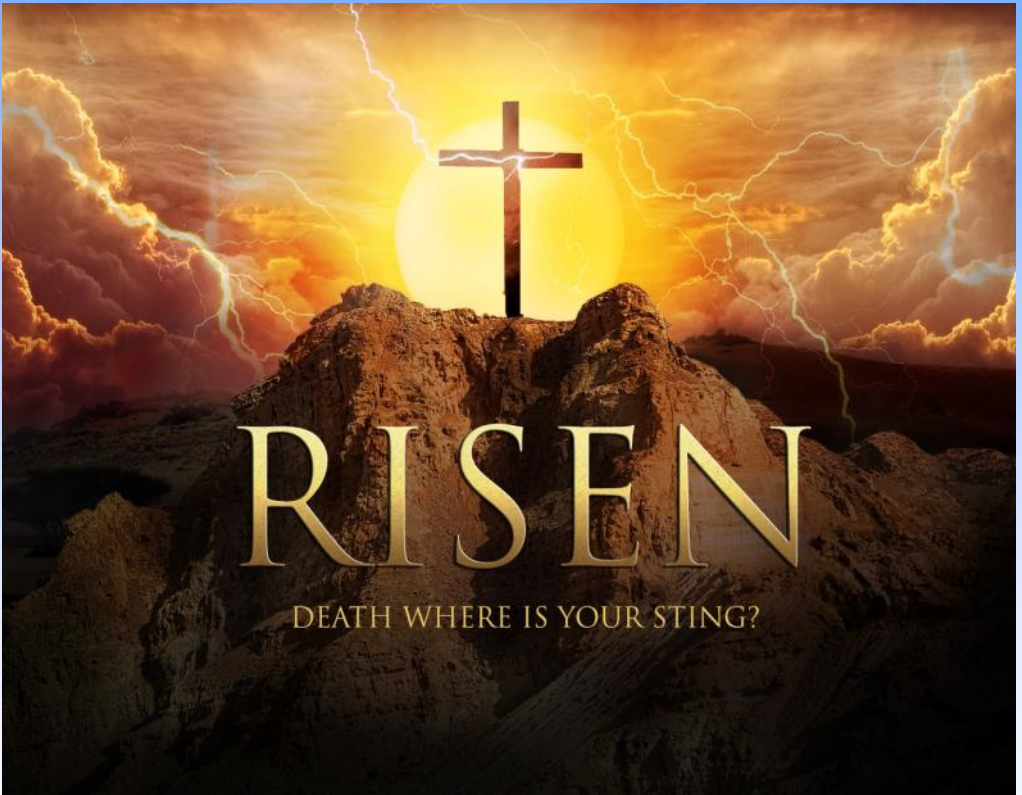


Scope

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Congratulations, Edith

G.B. and B.B. Successes

YF at Hillsborough



Thoughts from The Manse

May, 2020

Dear Members of Second Comber,

What a difference a day makes are the opening words of a song, written in 1934 but still popular. In the 1970's a version hit the charts of the period:

What a difference a day makes.

Twenty-four little hours

Brought sun and the flowers

Where there used to be rain.

It was written as a love song suggesting that romance had suddenly brightened up someone's day. The change was immediate and unprepared for. It struck a note of optimism.

Within twenty-four hours, however, the opposite emotion can be experienced as news about the Coronavirus spread. The change for us has also been virtually immediate and unprepared for. Within a short space of time, our world has been turned "upside down".

In the book of James, in the Bible, the writer reminds us that a day can suddenly change our hopes.

Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this city or that city, spend a year here, carrying on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life....? Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'.

Soon it will be Easter with the message that in the cross and resurrection of Jesus there is hope for tomorrow and for all who trust in Him.

What a difference that day has brought to the world. In Christ, we have a living hope that will not pass away, regardless of the circumstances that may surround us.

I pray that this eternal hope in Jesus will keep us in these very challenging days.

**Your Minister and Friend,
Roy Mackay**



Editorial

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea

(William Wordsworth)

Central to a TV documentary of last year was a survey of senior citizens which invited them to reflect on their growing up in a bygone era, and to have their say on modern contemporary living. The findings were interesting. We might well have expected a good deal of rose-tinted reminiscence about 'the good old days', and invidious comparisons with present-day life styles and current practices. Such was not the case. The elderly men and women who contributed their points of view about both past and present were agreed that the standard of living and the material benefits of today's life far outweigh the hardships, financial insecurity and poor health care of their early years.

Significantly, the two aspects of the present which were seen as having declined socially and morally were good neighbourliness and respect for authority. The first of these is arguably a very personal and subjective matter, but the issue of lack of respect for the powers that be, the establishment, is more amenable to evidence-based examination, covering both generation gap analysis and today's overall societal behaviour and attitudes.

How often have you heard older people say, "In our young day we had respect for our betters. We would have run a mile if we had seen a policeman coming. If we had come home from school and complained that the teacher had caned us, we would have got a clip round the ear from our parents for good measure. Now some of the young hooligans show neither fear nor respect for the police, and the teachers get the same."

Regrettably statistics bear out these views. The incidence of verbal abuse and actual assaults upon teachers, including, remarkably, Primary School teachers, is at a new high in many of our inner city schools, and that trend is spreading beyond the urban limits. The number of staff needing to take time off through stress and nervous exhaustion gives cause for alarm. Likewise incidents involving attacks on the police by young people are commonplace, and in our province in particular children from Primary School age upwards in certain areas are not only not discouraged or restrained from such conduct, they are actively encouraged to regard the forces of law and order as legitimate targets for aggression. How this mindset, ingrained from childhood, can be reversed is virtually unanswerable, and the consequences for future generations very uncomfortable.

It would be disproportionate, however, to see this problem as a generational one, and very unfair to the many excellent young people who shine out today as the model citizens of tomorrow. The perpetrators are not just juvenile offenders, and the targets of disrespect and violence are not limited to officers of the law or the teaching profession. Unthinkable in the not very distant past, doctors, nurses and other medical staff are now being assaulted by adults in surgeries and hospitals, and paramedics are attacked in their ambulance, or at the scene, often by the very patient they are treating.

The authority figures in all these instances are labelled such by virtue of their professions, occupations and training. It is not their individual personalities or characters that mark them out as establishment personages, but their chosen role in society and the workplace. Individuals who stand out as having authority in their presence and person by dint of make-up and natural disposition, wholly independent of their vocation, seem to have inborn powers of leadership and command; they are the few who lead, and the many follow. Some call it charisma or dynamism, others see it as domination and control, but natural born leaders by a look or a word or by the simple gravitas of their being can command the respect and loyalty and obedience that are outside the grasp of the vast majority.

The human voice. What a wonderfully versatile and affective instrument, able to charm and soothe, startle and intimidate, by sound alone, irrespective of the words spoken. We are often attracted to the noise of children playing, for example, even though we cannot distinguish their actual words, although not everyone wants to, like the wit who remarked that nothing is more enchanting than the voices of young people when you can't hear what they say.

Singers and actors have made a fortune and a career based largely on the quality of their vocal delivery. Great leaders, whether dictators or benevolent statesmen, have attracted and controlled their people by the authority of their addresses, often relying as much upon the emotive power and persuasive sound of their rhetoric as upon the strength of their arguments. We are often judged by our accent, the simple sound alone of our voice. In his celebrated play *Pygmalion* George Bernard Shaw satirises the disproportionate influence of accent and pronunciation when it encourages society to assess an individual's social background and intellect solely by his or her diction.

We are familiar with the spoken words of Jesus as they are recorded and reported in Scripture, but can we 'hear' His voice as He speaks to His disciples, addresses huge crowds, drives out the traders from the Temple, cries out to His Father from the Cross? When Jesus calls His first disciples, Peter and his brother Andrew, as they are casting a net by the Sea of Galilee, the moment is recorded in such a matter-of-fact way that their response to His invitation to follow Him and become fishers of men seems extraordinary: *at once they left their nets and followed Him*. This appears sudden and even reckless. Have these hardy fishermen been so overpowered by the authority in the command, has the note of the voice been so peremptory, that they have been cowed into submission and deserted their occupation in surrender to the imperiousness of the instruction? Nothing of the kind. What Matthew and Mark are reporting here, and hence the apparently prosaic tone, is not an instantaneous event between Jesus and people who barely knew Him, but the culmination of a relationship. These disciples, as with James and his brother John, already knew Jesus and had been prepared to meet Him through the preaching of John the Baptist, and from having heard Jesus preaching to the people. They had already been drawn to Him by his teaching, *for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes*. Jesus had already 'discipled' them to some extent, and was now calling them to full-time ministry. The voice they heard was not magisterial or overpowering, but rich in challenge and promise.

It has been asked how Jesus was able to speak to multitudes, crowds in their thousands, without the aid of voice amplification, and in intrinsically noisy outdoor settings. No doubt the crowds who flocked to hear Him were noisy in their comings and goings and internal chatting, while other factors such as children crying, sheep and goats on the hillsides, and the noise of the wind would have added to the level of interference from ambient sounds. While there is no doubt that Jesus required a strong voice, He was also able to take advantage of the natural features of the surrounding terrain. The Sea of Galilee region, a combination of hills, vales and land ascending away from the shore, provided its own 'public address system' in the form of a natural amphitheatre, an outdoor auditorium of excellent acoustical topography all along the shoreline. In short, the geography of the land allowed for acoustic enhancement that enabled Jesus, whether on land or on a boat, to reach His listeners.

It was from a boat on Galilee that Jesus told the parable of The Sower to a very large crowd. Appropriately the emphasis in the story is very clearly on hearing, not just with the ears, but with the heart. However modern our state of the art equipment may be, however loud or clear the sound quality, the message hasn't changed from its original delivery on a humble boat to a crowded shore, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear," so that we may understand and respond accordingly.

An Atheist's View on Life

I will live my life according to these beliefs:
God does not exist
It is foolish to think
that there is an all-knowing God with a cosmic plan
that an all-powerful God brings purpose to the pain and
suffering in the world
It is a comforting thought.
However,
It is only wishful thinking
people can do as they wish without eternal consequences.
The idea that I am deserving of hell
because of sin
is a lie meant to make me a slave to those in power
"The more you have the happier you will be."
our existence has no grand meaning or purpose
In a world without God
life is an endless cycle of guilt and shame
without God everything is fine.
It is ridiculous to think
I am lost and in need of saving.

A Christian's View on Life **(Read each line from bottom to top)**



Glenariff Drive
Comber

Dear Editor,

We would just like through the church magazine to say a big thank you to everyone in the Catering Corps for their endeavours at Georgie's funeral. We have had numerous people telling us since then that the service was a lovely dignified tribute to Georgie and the tea laid on afterwards was very professional and done to the highest standards anyone could wish for.

Georgie would of course have been extremely proud of these highly favourable comments because, as you all know, her one big interest outside family life was Second Comber Church and in particular the Catering Corps. She was probably one of the founder members when it was formed back in 1972.

We are sure that the Catering Corps ladies are all sharing with the family in their great sense of loss. Georgie was often involved in the craic and many times probably the instigator of it, up until she was no longer able to attend due to her failing health.

Once again, many thanks on behalf of the Hamilton family for the wonderful catering service and also for the very generous donation to the Diabetes charity.

Kind regards,
George and Jim Hamilton

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Shankill Parish Church
Lurgan

Dear Editor,

I'd just like to congratulate Anne and the rest of the Refresh team upon a wonderful spirit-filled conference! Thank you so much for welcoming us and helping us to leave feeling refreshed and renewed. A big thank you to the LIFE Team for all their hard work. When's the next one? Book me in!

Yours sincerely,
Wendy Gilbert

.....

First Presbyterian Church
Comber

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to congratulate Liz Hamilton and her team for the wonderful day I had at Refresh, the Women's Conference, in your church. Right from the greetings at the front door all and through the day it was relaxing and I felt spiritually fed.

The music from Alison was amazing. God was certainly with us on this very special occasion. Well done, girls.

Yours sincerely,
Sandra Edgar

Gransha Presbyterian Church

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to say to Liz Hamilton how I personally enjoyed the Refresh Women's Conference in Second Comber. It was truly a very inspirational day.

I was very encouraged to see such an event in Comber, breaking into hard ground. Well done to you and Team for hard work. God's richest blessings for future events.

Yours sincerely,
Rosemary Beggs

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Killinchy Road
Comber

Dear Editor,

I would like through Scope magazine to thank Ruth Scott and her lovely team (too many to mention) for the time and energy they have put into Sunday Night Together (SNT).

This began as a follow-on from Alpha and has been very useful as I believe many of us were not ready for Alpha to end because we still had lots to discuss, with God's word at the centre of the discussions.

SNT has also been useful to help us all keep in touch, and as a result we have enjoyed the meet-ups on one Sunday evening every month, engaging in further discussions, some bible study, lots of fellowship and friendship. We also enjoyed some delicious sweet treats with a tea or coffee afterwards. I would particularly like to thank the team members responsible for this as all food allergies were kindly catered for.

I would love to see SNT continue in some form as I believe this to be very beneficial to our church community.

Yours sincerely,
Carolyn Martin

CONGREGATIONAL VISITATION

We ask members to please note that due to the spread of the Coronavirus in our society, our minister and pastoral visitors will be restricted making house calls in the community.

- **Please telephone the minister if a hospital call is required. He no longer is permitted to make hospital visits as a routine matter**
- **Visitation to homes has now to be based on emergency and very urgent calls only.**
- **Please contact the minister by telephone if you have any needs or queries.**

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

What a busy and successful year this has been to date for our Boys' Brigade. Unless you are closely involved in one capacity or another you may well have little idea of the range of activities and enterprises that go to make up the normal programme of events for boys of all ages and levels. Below is a captioned montage of just a few of the successes, skills and practices that are on the menu in the Boys' Brigade in Second Comber.



Junior Section Stoolball Competition winners who defended and retained the Belfast Battalion Spring Competition trophy.



Junior Section's Connor Scates, highly praised for his clarinet playing in the Musician of the Year Competition.



Anchor Boys' team games

Senior boys getting lessons on basic car maintenance.





The Junior Section Swim Team at the N.I. District Gala at Limavady. The boys won 5 gold, 1 silver, 1 bronze.



Volunteers at the bag pack at Tesco N'Ards raised £1,750 for minibus fund and programme costs.

The Anchor Boys love to hear the leaders tell a Bible Story. This year the proceeds of our uniform swap shop bought a range of new devotional, picture and pop-up books for all the boys to enjoy.



Junior Section Boys enjoy an exciting science evening with Ruth Dalzell.

Not New Year's Eve Party



On 30th December 2019, the youth fellowship team hosted our second annual 'Not New Years Eve' party! Our young people turned out in their best clothes ready for some great fun, food and photo opportunities! We had a fantastic group of people bring food or drinks and help set up and run the evening. YF had decided this year we would charge a ticket fee and that fee would go towards the Manse fund. Thanks to our amazing volunteers and some generous donations, £360 was raised. Thank you to all parents and young people for their attendance and donations and thank you so much to everyone who came and helped.

A police officer stops a driver and tells him, "You've just won a hundred pounds in a random reward scheme for drivers wearing seat belts. What will you do with the money?"

The man says, "Maybe I'll take driving lessons and get a driving licence."

"Never mind him," says his wife from the passenger seat. "He always tries to be funny when he's drunk."

A married couple are at a dance when they see a man on the dance floor doing it all- break dancing, moonwalking, back flips, the lot.

"You see that man on the floor," the woman says. "Twenty five years ago he proposed to me and I turned him down."

"Looks like he's still celebrating," replies her husband

Below is the letter received for the donation from our B.B. President's Christmas Appeal.



Mr Gareth McKibbin
Treasurer
2nd Comber Boys Brigade
2nd Comber Presbyterian Church
Killinchy Street
Comber

09 January 2020

Dear Mr McKibbin

Thank you so much for your recent donation of £130.00. Please pass on our sincere thanks to everyone at 2nd Comber Boys Brigade for their kindness.

As you may know, Simon Community NI has been working to address homelessness here for over 40 years. Last year we helped over 3100 people in Northern Ireland from all walks of life – adults, children and families, all frightened and anxious for their future.

However, homelessness is more than providing a roof over someone's head. We are committed to supporting the people we work with as they fight to overcome experiences of family breakdown, financial difficulties, unemployment, addictions and ill mental health.

Each night Simon Community NI provides 382 warm, safe beds for those with no home, in 22 accommodation sites across Northern Ireland. These include our family project which provides accommodation and support for up to 24 families at a time and three specialist young people's projects which provide care for almost 60 young people. Some of our young people are still at school and at the end of a school day instead of coming home to the love and support of a family unit, they go back to one of our projects.

We want to break the cycle of homelessness for vulnerable people and give them the skills and confidence to build a brighter future.

Thanks to your support we are able to really make a difference. Your generosity is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A. Scott'.

Amanda Scott
Community Fundraising Manager

A man was mowing his front lawn when his next door neighbour came out and went to her mailbox. She opened it, looked inside, slammed the lid down, and strode back into the house. She repeated this twice more, each time slamming the lid down more angrily, and storming back inside.

Next time she comes out the man asks, "Is something wrong?"

"There certainly is. This new computer keeps saying, 'You've got mail'."

AROUND THE KITCHEN TABLE

The kitchen is often called the heart and soul of the home. It's where meals and memories are made, where families and friends gather, where traditions are born, and where stories are told and retold. The kitchen table, then, occupies a place of honour as the heart of the heart of the home.

Take a moment to picture your own childhood kitchen table.



Was it small and intimate or large and sprawling? Was it polished and smooth or scarred and well used? Were there blemishes and imperfections that could be traced back to the time somebody spilled some nail polish or set down a hot saucepan without using a mat? What games do you remember playing on, around, or underneath that table? What family stories were chatted about?

Whether it is pine, oak, varnished, recycled or modern glass, in the domestic geography of our daily lives the kitchen table is a constant, a silent witness to sustenance and solace, deliberation and argument, consolation and celebration. What other piece of furniture has witnessed so much and revealed so little?

It's fascinating to realise that a table was chosen as the location for Jesus to speak His lasting message of hope. Jesus could have chosen anywhere for this significant act to occur, yet He chose the table to share such an important poignant moment.

Eugene Peterson wrote, "*When Jesus himself wanted to explain to His disciples what His forthcoming death was all about, He didn't give them a theory, He gave them a meal.*" Perhaps there's a deeper message there; a table is a place to come together, to be replenished, to communicate (which comes from the word commune) and to depart from, refreshed and with hope.

Liz Hamilton

A husband and wife are driving in Scotland and reach a sign for Kirkcudbright. They start arguing over the pronunciation of the name and are still arguing over it when they stop for lunch. At the counter the man says to a waitress, "Before we order, could you settle an argument for us? Would you please pronounce where we are very slowly."
"Certainly. B-U-R-G-E-R K-I-N-G."

George phoned the police and reported that there were people stealing stuff from his garden shed. He was told that there was nobody available to come out. George waited a minute and then called back and reported that he had shot all the intruders.

In a few minutes two police cars and an Armed Response Unit roared up, and caught the thieves red-handed. One of the policemen said to George, "I thought you said you'd shot them."

"I thought you said there were no police available," replied George.

Boy: Dad, are spiders good to eat?

Father: Don't talk about things like that over dinner.

Boy: Doesn't matter. There was a spider in your soup, but it's gone now.

The BB Breakfast Club

It's been said that the money we appreciate most is the money we have had to earn, which is why the band of BB boys, together with leaders and helpers, who braved the wet weather to wash cars in late February, will appreciate more than most the purchase of a new minibus to replace the one which has given such sterling service over the past number of years. The car owners enjoyed getting into the Main Hall out of the miserable conditions to be served a full Ulster Fry breakfast. Many thanks to all who supported this venture, both on the serving and receiving end.



One-liners about work

If it wasn't for the last minute, nothing would get done.

Team work is important. It allows you to blame somebody else.

I get plenty of exercise, jumping to conclusions, pushing my luck, dodging deadlines.

To err is human, to blame somebody else shows management potential.

I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.

He who smiles in a crisis has found somebody else to blame.

Some cause happiness wherever they go, some whenever they go.

Worrying works. 90% of the things I worry about never happen.

Hard work never killed anyone, but why take the chance.

Pity the archaeologist, his work lies in ruins.

I don't mind coming to work, it's the 8 hour wait to go home I can't stand.

The trouble with being punctual is there's nobody there to appreciate it.

A committee is twelve men doing the work of one.

2 types of people don't say much, those who are quiet and those who talk a lot.

Many people quit looking for work when they have found a job.

I'm a great motivator: people have to work twice as hard when I'm around.

I have a lot of jokes about unemployed people, but none of them work.

I started out with nothing and I still have most of it.

Trindling Your Egg

I love Easter, for it brings back so many happy memories of my childhood days. One memory from this time of the year is gathering gorse blooms and hurrying home with them for mam to add to the pan of eggs she was hard boiling for us. The blooms gave them a lovely yellow colour and a nice smell. Sometimes she would put in onion skins as well to add colour. The next activity once the eggs were ready was rolling them down a steep hill. Often one or more of my eggs would hit a stone and get cracked, but before it became too badly damaged I would shell it and have an outdoor snack.



This practice of rolling our eggs has largely died out as a game or item of play, but what it commemorated will never disappear, the rolling away of the large stone covering the entrance to the tomb in which Jesus lay. On that very first Easter dawn the two Marys hurried to the place where His body had been laid to anoint Him with spices. They must have feared that they would not be able to move the large stone to reach Him, so their surprise must have been great when they saw it had been rolled away. Even greater, however, would have been their surprise to discover that His body was no longer there, and then the greatest surprise of all, the glorious, glad news that He is risen and alive. If we want to celebrate Easter this year, and every year, we don't need to roll hard boiled eggs down a steep hill; we just need to share the great news of His resurrection, and celebrate, celebrate, celebrate!

Jean Galway



A Drone's-eye View

Here are our church buildings and grounds seen from a very different viewpoint, one that must be new to most of us. Attractive, aren't they? Sometimes it's good to see objects, and people, from another point of view; it can help us appreciate what we've got and not take things so much for granted.

(Photo courtesy of L. Rowan)

Edith Reaches Ruby Ranking



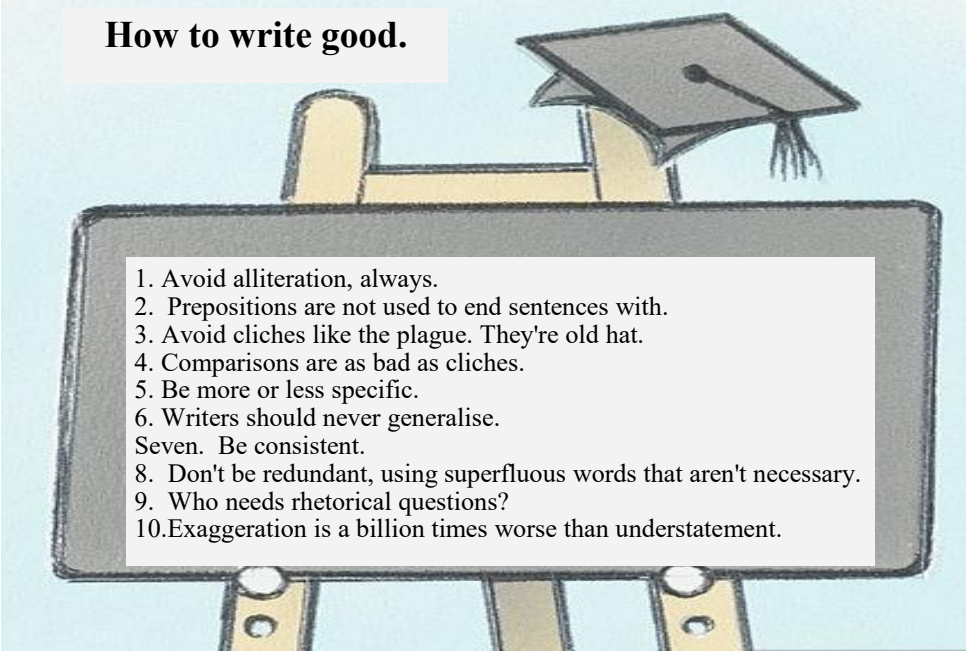
Ordinarily denoting the fortieth anniversary of a marriage, the term *ruby celebration* has a very different application for Edith Irwin, that helpful staff member of the Newtownards Chronicle who is invariably our first port of call whenever we require the services of the local press. Edith has just completed forty years of priceless service in a business which is traditionally known for a high turn-over of staff. Well done, Edith, it's a triumph of dedicated service, and more than a little stamina.

During those four decades Edith has continuously shown herself to be totally reliable, efficient, pleasant and discreet, always fulfilling her promises and, a rare quality today, returning a phone call if she has not been available to deal with an enquiry.

What many readers may not know is that the quiet and self-effacing person who works away in the background and chooses to stay out of the spotlight, is of great value to more than just her workplace. Edith is a wonderful worker in the community for good causes, and has a real talent for organising from scratch large fund-raising events for worthwhile charities. She has run concerts and dances and social evenings in aid of Marie Curie, Prostate Cancer, The RVH Cancer Department, the Net, and to assist Heather Russell's visit to India. It is no surprise to those who know her well that in her characteristically modest and effective fashion Edith has raised over £25,000 for charitable purposes, without ever clamouring for applause or seeking the limelight.

Congratulations, Edith, on a marvellous ruby milestone in your professional career, and on an exemplary personal history of good works.

How to write good.

- 
1. Avoid alliteration, always.
 2. Prepositions are not used to end sentences with.
 3. Avoid cliches like the plague. They're old hat.
 4. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
 5. Be more or less specific.
 6. Writers should never generalise.
 - Seven. Be consistent.
 8. Don't be redundant, using superfluous words that aren't necessary.
 9. Who needs rhetorical questions?
 10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

Well Done, Girls

The success rate of our Girls' Brigade Teams this year has been exceptional, with all getting through to the NI Finals in their respective competitions. Warmest congratulations to the girls and their leaders.



Junior PE team:

Katherine Todd, Nicole Craigan, Hannah Bartlett, Sophia Flanigan, Jorja McCloskey, Susan Kirton, Tiana Clarke and Lucie Hillen.

Leaders are Rachael Steele and Sophie Harte.

Brigader PE soloists: Sophie Hoey and Victoria Lloyd with Elizabeth Mahood

CONGRATULATIONS



Explorers' PE team:

Sophie Quinn, Grace McNeilly, Ellie Davis, Emily Edmonds, Lucy Torney, Sophie Rowntree, Tyla McBurney, Eva Gilmore, Jessa Downey and Esme McKenzie

Senior PE team:

Ruby Donaldson, Jessica McCarter, Abigail Murdoch, Hannah McBratney, Judith Beattie (officer)
Zara Lloyd, Lucy Wray, Grace Patterson and Rachel Lamont



Brigader PE team:
Sarah Ewart, Sophie Hoey,
Jade Hillen, Elizabeth Mahood
(officer), Jessica Murdoch, Kathryn
Finlay and Victoria Lloyd.

Junior Choral Speaking team:
Nicole Craigan, Gracie
Miskelly, Caitlin Boal, Hannah
Bartlett, Katherine Todd,
Niamh Boreland, Ellie



Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press...Stop Press

Congratulations to our Junior Marching Teams who had major successes in the District Competition held in Second Comber in mid February. The 'A' team was placed 2nd and the 'B' team 3rd.



Katherine Todd , Gabriella Scates, Caitlin
Boal, Officer: Laura Rainey
Lucy Hillen , Ellie Murdoch ,Tiana Clarke,
Anna Farrelly, Niamh Boreland



Officer: Jocelyn Sturgeon, Gracie Miskelly,
Jorja McCloskey, Hannah Bartlett, Leader:
Laura Rainey

Chloe Bartlett , Susan Kirton, Emma Cowden

REFRESH

In early February Second Comber hosted a Women's Conference under the title Refresh. It proved to be highly successful with an attendance into three figures. Congratulations to Liz Hamilton, Anne Johnston and Laura Lamont and to their helpers. These two photographs are an indication of the size and spirit of the event.



The new employee stood in front of the shredder looking confused.
"Need some help?" a secretary asked.
"Yes, how does this thing work?"
"Simple," and she took a fat report out of his hand and fed it into the shredder.
"Thanks, but where do the copies come out?"

oooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo

Father: Why's your mom so quiet this morning?
Son: It's my fault.
Father: Your fault. What did you do?
Son: She asked me to hand her the lipstick and I gave her a glue stick by mistake.
Father: I'm proud of you, my son.

Christians and the Coronavirus.

The issue that is dominating today's news and the public mind is the rise and spread of the coronavirus. It has become a pandemic, a worldwide crisis. How are Christians to respond to the fears and uncertainty that are all around?

The gospel assures us of a place to go in any and all crises, including a health issue like this. That place is described in the Word of God that reminds us where to put our hope. It is not the financial markets nor our current health status that provides the basis of our assurance.

Psalm 20:7 reminds us: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:7).

Or, we might say, "Some trust in their financial portfolio and some in their physical well-being, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God."

For believers, this is a good day, a day to remember that our hope is not in what we save or even in our medical condition. This is critical to hold to when fear threatens to grab hold of our hearts: our God is not surprised by a viral outbreak. He is not disinterested in our fears. He is our rock, our light, and our salvation (Psalm 27:1). This might be a good time to look for support to scripture instead of to news broadcasts.

As western European Christians we are accustomed to comfort and security. Suddenly, as the possibility for reversal becomes greater, it is how we respond in times when we feel powerless and vulnerable that may offer the opportunity for growth for us, and opportunity to witness to others. Jesus told us to let our light shine in a dark world (Matthew 5:14-16), and our response in a time like this may be such a time to shine.

The history of the church abounds with examples of the church stepping into the darkness of suffering to shine as lights. Maybe that is what we are about to face - we don't know.

We need to be reminded that the gospel calls us to live sacrificially in the face of crisis. Although fear can threaten to flood our hearts and tempt us to isolate and hoard, Scripture anchors our hope in a God who is greater than the pain we endure in this life. Even, or especially, in those storms that we must weather there are windows of opportunity to minister. In doing so we testify to the truth that this world is not our home, we are citizens of another.

For now, let's rest in the truth of the Word, that we may be ready when dark times seem to prevail..

A boy is visiting a small town and sees an Indian chief sitting below a sign which reads, *World's longest Memory*. The boy asks him, "What did you have for breakfast this day thirty years ago?"

The Indian promptly replies, " Eggs," but the boy goes away unconvinced.

Twenty years later the boy, now a man, is back in the same small town and sees the same Indian chief below the same sign. He says to him in traditional greeting, "How."

"Scrambled," replies the Indian.



New Year's Day at Nendrum Abbey

The first impression's frankly underwhelming:
uncertain path and awkward climb
up quasi-penitential slope;
then random ruins, bits of broken wall
in a roughly semi-circular open space.
The heart had hoped for more.

Maybe
the title *Abbey*
pre-sets the soul to grope
for monastic things in an Ordered place:
cloisters, thickset door,
arched roof and windows, refectory hall,
and even the whisper of a windblown bell ring.

But take your time,
allow fond fancies, like Strangford Lough below,
to seep through modern mind's defences
until a stream of history floods in,
like Viking raids a thousand years ago.
Put on a phantom Benedictine tunic,
see and touch with medieval senses,
and the pageant will begin.

That crude stump's now a fine round tower
inside concentric cashels, dry stone made.
Designs in Celtic hand, and markings runic
inform slate tablets in the graveyard's shade,
and sundial on its pillar shows the hour.

You'll feel pre-Norman reverence in your bones;
more than moss and ivy clings to ancient stones.

Noel Spence

FIELD STUDY

When the flock was moved to pastures new,

 somehow in the hullabaaaloo,
 one ewe was left behind;
a brambled, dowdy little creature,
it yet had one redeeming feature,
 found most in human kind –
the need to seek companion, friend;
how else can lonely sorrow mend?

 All hearts dread life alone,
but worse it is for sheep that need
 to follow always others' lead,
 with no aim of their own.

It chanced that in this same bare field,
 beyond a spinney, well concealed,
 there grazed a handsome mare.

With sheepish look, as well it might,
 the ewe inquired left and right,
 and found the chestnut there.

Who knows which made first overture,
and showed horse-sense, but this is sure,
 their friendship quickly grew.

On daily walks, for interest's sake,
we'd call the mare, and in its wake
 the sheep came trotting too.

Content it seemed to be a page,
 an ovine extra on the stage
 where horse-play stole the show.
That mare must know how Mary felt,
for where it cantered, galloped, knelt,
 the lamb was sure to go.

Let others preach of poor sheep lost,
and ransomed home at priceless cost,
 my tale I will relate:
the horse went back to Meadow Farm,
to stable straw and whinneys warm,
 and soon forgot its mate.

 This fond recital's woolly, twee,
 not to be taken seriously,
 perhaps it should be, though.
Go down that road, you'll hear the greeting,
a solitary ewe's thin bleating,
 I heard it, just an hour ago.

Noel Spence



A TIME FOR FOCUS

It was only the other morning; the house was silent, a cup of coffee and a quiet read beckoned. Ah, bliss! As I moved to the sofa with coffee and book in hand, I began to realise that my subconscious mind was already making

a quick appraisal: what are the ambient light conditions? how big is the print on the book's pages? will, I need my glasses? Yes, I have reached that time of life where the print is either out of focus or too small.

Similar conditions can affect our spiritual lives too. Can the light go out on our faith, can the Word of God seem distant and faint? Can even the promises of God lose their power, simply because God himself has become small in our eyes?

We may be able to recite a number of God's promises, but if within our hearts God is no longer our treasure and King, our vision has dimmed. He is no longer the one who conquers armies and cuts passages in the sea, no longer for us the Shepherd who seeks His sheep and keeps them safe behind His staff, no longer the Lord who walks on waves and calls the dead back from the grave. Can this become a reality that as a people we can slowly, subtly, forget God's power, God's wisdom, God's tenderness?

It is not hard as you look around communities today to see a society where the promises of God seem powerless to quiet our fears, soothe our grief, lift our worries, or motivate our obedience. Why is this, what can we do? Yes, for sure we need to hear those promises again, but it is more than simply hearing those promises, the need is to behold the God who gives them.

In Isaiah 40, the prophet speaks to a group of broken Israelites. The nation that once shone like the stars in the sky had been blackened by exile. As Israel looks back from Babylon, the promises of God seem buried, lost. How would God give Israel an everlasting kingdom when they were slaves in a foreign land (2 Samuel 7:13)? How would God make Israel a blessing to the world, when a curse seemed to have had fallen on them? How would God raise up from Israel a serpent-crushing king when they were under Babylon's heel (Genesis 3:15)?

Maybe we are asking similar questions when we struggle to remember God's promises from the wreckage of our own circumstances and ask, "How can God satisfy me?" We can look back at a devastating failure and ask, "How can God forgive me?" We can look up from the crater of some loss and ask, "How can God comfort me?" We can stand in the midst of the COVID 19 virus and question God's sovereignty, and fall into despair. It is in those moments of pain or anguish that we need God to do for us what he did for Israel. We need Him to come alongside us, remind us of His promises, and then say, "Behold your God" (Isaiah 40:9).

Who is the God who gives His promises to us? He is the God of might, who created the world by His word. He is the God of wisdom, who makes a way in the wilderness. He is the God of tenderness, who carries His children home. He is bigger than all our problems.

The God who speaks His promises to us is the same God who said, "Let there be light," and the darkness fled (Genesis 1:3). When He speaks, stars burn and planets lock into orbit; rivers run and oceans fill earth's floors; valleys sink and mountains race to the sky. The grass in all the world may wither, and the flower on every hillside fade, but the word of Him who made them will stay and stand forever (Isaiah 40:8). The Israelites thought their future as a nation had fallen with Jerusalem's walls, and that not even God could raise them up again. "My way is hidden from the Lord," they said. "My right is disregarded by my God" (Isaiah 40:27).

We can be assured, however, that Israel's exile had not taken God by surprise, nor had it cast them out of His sight. "Have you not known?" Isaiah asks. "Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God. His understanding is unsearchable" (Isaiah 40:28). When Israel was lost in the wilderness of exile, and saw no way of getting back home, God paved a highway right through the desert (Isaiah 40:3).

No trouble is too tangled for God to untie. No path is too twisted for Him to straighten. No heart is too shattered for Him to gather up and put back together. He knows every detail of our troubles, and He knows how to come alongside us as we wait for Him and then make us rise up with wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31).

If God's might shows us that He is powerful to fulfil his promises, and if His wisdom convinces us that our circumstances are no exception, then His tenderness assures us that He delights to use all his might and wisdom in love for weak people like us. He is the Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to find the lost and wandering one, and when He finds him, He bends down, gathers him up in his arms, and carries him all the way home (Isaiah 40:11).

Seven hundred years after Isaiah told Israel to behold their God, John the Baptist picked up the prophet's words and preached them in the Judean wilderness. "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low . . . and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:5-6; Isaiah 40:4-5).

What happened then? Well, John stepped aside as another appeared, a man who walked over those valleys and hills and made His way through that wilderness. He was a man of might, who bound hell's armies and brought with Him heaven's kingdom. He was a man of wisdom, who silenced the scribes and spoke the very words of God. He was a man of tenderness, who healed the sick and heralded God's favour to all.

As Easter approaches, how fitting is it that we again reflect on what happened next; something so marvellous, so unexpected, something beyond comprehension. Here was one who would lay down beneath the biggest of our problems, allowing himself to be beaten, hung on a tree, buried. But only so He could carry our curse to the grave, sink it deep into the ground, and then rise up in the power of an indestructible life. What grace to behold when we can see that every promise from God comes to us now through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20), the God with scars on His hands. Yes, today your problems may be big, perhaps even bigger than you know, but your God is bigger, and His promises to you are stronger and surer. So, look up from your problems, refocus your dim eyes and listen again to God's powerful, wise and tender voice: then ask God to help you behold Him.

God Bless.

Gary Dalzell

Riddles

What is red and smells like blue paint? Answer: Red paint

What do you call bears with no ears? Answer: B

What is a foot long and slippery? Answer: A slipper

Where does a General keep his armies? Answer: In his sleeves

Have you heard about corduroy pillows? Answer: They make headlines

YF Weekend



On the 13th March YF went on its first ever weekend away. Along with leaders Robert, Ruth, Carolyn, Jess, Clare, Chloe, Mel and Steven, 19 members of YF went down to Hillsborough to the BB Residential Centre for a weekend of fun, games and not much sleep. During the course of the weekend we played lots of rock n roll bingo, did a scavenger hunt and raced against each other in Mario kart. We had devotional time with Jess, Carolyn, Chloe and Robert where we talked about how God loves us, how we have all sins, how Jesus died for us and what we can do for Jesus. The talks were interactive and engaging and taught me a lot about God. I'd like to say thank you to Avril Crawford and Steven Cowden for the food they made for us to eat throughout the weekend; it was delicious! I really enjoyed the weekend and it was great to spend time with my friends and God.

Olivia Porter



A woman goes to her local supermarket to buy a turkey for Christmas. She picks through the frozen turkeys in the large freezer cabinet but can't find one she thinks would be big enough for her extended family.

"Excuse me," she says to a passing member of staff, "do these turkeys get any bigger?"

"Sorry, ma'am," the young man earnestly replies, "they're all dead."



Now Who's That?

Who is this studious young fellow with the engaging smile, looking like he's ready for Harvard? He shouldn't be too hard to identify. You can check him out at the foot of this page.

The God Who Provides

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions.

Exodus 16 v.4

Corvid-19 is upon us, and stores everywhere have empty shelves. People are seeking wipes and disinfectant sprays like they are precious jewels. The problem is not about supply but demand. We can learn a lot from the Bible how God taught his people to deal with supply and demand.

Just recently a lady went to her local store to get a few things. One of the items was some toilet paper. She left her shopping trolley with the toilet paper in it for a few moments, and when she returned the toilet paper was gone. Whoever took it must have believed that demand would exceed the supply, and because of the panic over the coronavirus, he or she was probably right.

Likewise, stories are circulating about toilet rolls being taken from restaurants and pubs and such public places, but as somebody observed, this practice will soon stop because nobody will be there to steal them.

In Verse 19 Moses told the people not to take more than each one needed for that day. Of course, some of the people disobeyed and tried to hoard some food, and it became rancid overnight. In times of national distress, people start to stockpile, with the result that some have more than they need and others less. God has a better plan, which is to trust Him.

We cannot speak for the world, but as Christians, we should call it what it is. This panic mentality is unbelief in the faithfulness of God. Jehovah, the God who provides, will always meet our reasonable demands.

Yes, you were right, of course it's our genial caretaker, Deric McConnell.

Church Records

Baptisms

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me"

Charlie Ian Jones
Micah Zach Doherty

Deaths

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life"

Miss Jean Middleton	Died 20th December, 2019
Mrs. Lily Dalzell	Died 6th January, 2020
Mrs Georgie Hamilton	Died 8th January, 2020
Mr. Tom Price	Died 28th January, 2020
Mrs. Margaret McBride,	Died 9th March, 2020

New Members

Dr. & Mrs. N. Sharma

Change of Address

Mrs. Leila Orme
Mrs. Beatrice McIlroy
Mrs. Muriel Stead
Mr. Mark Dugan

These are Actual Newspaper Headlines

Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says

Miners Refuse to Work After Death

War Dims Hope for Peace

Children Make Nutritious Snacks

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge

Youth Group Raises £500 for Drug Abuse

Cold Spell Linked to Temperature

High School Drop-outs Cut in Half

Service Plan

MAY

3rd	11.30 am	"Show Peace" <i>Ephesians 6 v 15</i>	RM
10th	11.30 am	Christian Aid Service	
	6.30 pm	Praise & Prayer - Smyth Hall	
		Prayer Development Group	
17th	11.30 am	Sacrament of the Lord's Supper	
		"Keep Trusting" <i>Ephesians 6 v 16</i>	RM
24th	11.30 am	"Rescued" <i>Ephesians 6 v 17</i>	
	6.30 pm	Evening Service - Welcome Area	GD
31st	11.30 am	"What's in your head?" <i>Ephesians 6 v 17a</i>	RM

JUNE

7th	11.30 am	"God's methods - not your own" <i>Ephesians 6 v 17b</i>	RM
	6.30 pm	Summer Epilogue - Welcome Area	RM
14th	11.30 am	Service led by Ignite/Lightship	RM/RD
21st	11.30 am	"Keep on praying" <i>Ephesians 6 v 18-20</i>	RM
	6.30 pm	Summer Epilogue - Welcome Area	RM

JESUS WAS A GREAT MIXER John's Gospel

28th	11.30 am	"...with those who DOUBT" <i>John 1 v 30-51</i>	RD
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THE UNITED APPEAL

Finances the home and overseas work of our

Presbyterian Church.

SECOND COMBER'S TARGET

£22,740

Easter Sunday is the first of our 3 Offerings

(£45.00 per family per year)

Thought for the day

Psalm 46

V. 10

***Be still and
know that I am
God.***



Close to God

Years ago people used to get up in time for the early morning news bulletins, and then maybe listen again at teatime. Now, such is progress (or is it?), we can have news reports 24/7: news feeds on our phones, bulletins every half hour, and “breaking news” items interrupting other programmes.

Unfortunately the media coverage of late has been difficult to listen to: raging fires, severe flooding and, more recently, the coronavirus. Is it safe to shake hands, embrace, and how close should we be to each other?

There’s no doubt about it, we are living in very uncertain times. As we listen to the news, how do we separate the facts from the hype?

I love the photo above, taken on a recent walk, of a lamb keeping close to a sheep. I can’t say if they are related or not, and there were lots of other animals in the field, but I watched as this little lamb, very unsteadily and just a little bit unsure, stepped out into a vast green space, but in all its uncertainty it knew that by keeping close to another sheep, older and wiser, it would be safe.

Isaiah 40v11 – *He tends his flock like a shepherd, He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart.*

What a wonderful picture Isaiah paints of God the shepherd, keeping us his children/lambs close to his heart.

How can we know the heart of God? Perhaps instead of watching regular news bulletins we could substitute a quiet time with God, listening to what He says, through His word, or even, and this I think is harder – being still. We could switch off our mobiles, our iPads, and just ‘be still’.

James 4 v8 – *Come near to God and He will come near to you.*

None of us knows what lies ahead, with our health, our families, or even with our church, but as we approach Easter, and think again of the darkness of Good Friday, may the light of Easter Sunday encourage us to know that Jesus is risen. His time on earth demonstrated His desire to be up close and personal with everyone He came into contact with, and now through the Holy Spirit we too can know that closeness.

Ruth Scott

