

The **Methodist** Church 



*Donaghadee Methodist
Church*

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*Magazine
Summer 2020*

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Editorial

Welcome to this, what can I call it, Covid 19 issue of the Church magazine. We thought another magazine would connect us while we still can't meet.

It might be the 'slimmer of the year' magazine as I haven't been able to contact contributors - but, never mind, you will be able to contribute to the next issue, so start thinking and writing!

We have an article by John Magowan, who, you will be sorry to hear, has had a stroke. We send him best wishes for a speedy recovery. We also send best wishes to Patsy, Charlie and Joe who have all been in hospital and to any other members of the Church family who have been ill.

At my request, Maureen Parks has written a book review, something we haven't had in the magazine for quite some time, so I'm looking forward to hearing about the books that you have been reading during lockdown.

I am grateful to Ann McDade for letting me have the articles by Michael Clarke, a friend who is now ninety-two. Do any of you remember Silver Cities Airways, the car ferry which operated out of Ards Airport? If so, please let us have your memories.

I'm sure you enjoyed watching Tom's induction as President – wasn't the closing music wonderful! We wish him every blessing in what must seem a strange, indeed unique, term as President.

Finally, take care, keep safe and, God willing, we will meet together before too long, even if it will be different from what we have been used to.

Editor

Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends,

I was thinking recently about the distant past. It was Sunday, the 15th of March, in the year of our Lord 2020. I remember going to church that morning. I also remember that we sang four hymns, each of which has special resonance as I think about what has happened since.

We started with “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”, 465 in *Singing the Faith*. “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand”. Since that day, our weakness in the face of the virus has been become apparent. What we have been asked to do has not seemed like much: wash our hands, stay home, keep socially distant, but above all we have needed to do something the government has not asked us to do: to pray for God to hold us in his powerful hand. The last verse begins: “When I tread the verge of Jordan bid my anxious fears subside”, and then it ends with praise: “Songs of praises, I will ever give to thee.” We face our fears with praise.

Then we sang the contemporary setting of the 23rd Psalm written by Stuart Townend, which assures us of God’s

presence with us, even when we must walk the darkest path. Our third hymn, “The Church of Christ, in every age”, was by the great British Methodist hymnwriter Fred Pratt Green, who died in 2000 at the age of 97. Its first verse reminds us that the Church of Christ must “keep on rising from the dead”. When we once again are able to gather for worship, hopefully in September, as a church we will, in a sense, need to “rise from the dead”.

I now have a file folder on my computer labelled “Worship during the coronavirus pandemic”. In it I have eighteen Worship at Home sheets which I have produced for each of the eighteen Sundays since gathered worship was proscribed for health reasons. If we are able to resume gathered worship on the 6th of September as hoped, I will until then be preparing six more. These Worship at Home sheets potentially reach almost ninety people each week, two-thirds by email and the rest by post.

When we do resume gathered worship, things will be different. There will be social distancing with limited seating. There will be hand sanitiser stations. There will be a one-way system. There will be special rules for celebrating Holy Communion, including standing, rather than kneeling, at the communion rail. Singing in church may, or may not, be permitted by then.

The final hymn we sang as a church before lockdown was “May the mind of Christ my Saviour”, written early in the Twentieth Century by Katie Barclay Wilkinson. The last verse of that hymn goes: “May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe, looking only unto Jesus as I

onward go.” The race before us seems long as we cope with the pandemic and what it means to come out of lockdown. May we look only to Jesus, as we “onward go.”

Yours in Christ,

Tom

(Rev Dr Tom McKnight, President of MCI)

Return to Worship in Moat Street

Our church buildings have remained empty for months and we have been looking forward to the time when we can meet with each other as we meet with God. As God’s people we can worship in our homes and during lockdown we have found different ways to have “church”.

As we return to our church building to meet together and glorify God, we have to do so in a way that is safe and so we must follow the guidelines set out by the Methodist Church in Ireland. The main guidelines are:

1. We will use 2-metre distancing between individuals from different household units in the building, and this will mean there will be a limit of about 50 people in the sanctuary. You will be asked to sanitise your hands as you enter the building and use a one-way system where possible. No hugs, kisses or handshakes allowed.

2. We will not be singing but will listen to music and follow the words on the screens. We will be able to quietly say the

Lord's prayer together. Hymn books and bibles will not be available so bring your own if you prefer to use a book.

3. Toilets will be open, with sanitisers to wipe down the hard surfaces after use.

4. We will keep a record of those attending service to enable contact tracing should someone get ill.

5. Offerings will be placed in plates at church exits, in the Wesley Hall and porch entrance for those exiting from the balcony.

6. Some extra cleaning of surfaces will be required.

In September, to comply with the guidelines, you can come into car park as usual through the tunnel and enter church from the street through the front door. Your name will be recorded, you sanitise your hands, and pick up a service sheet, keeping a safe distance at all times.

We need to have a one-way system so people walking down the aisle are not breathing on people sitting down. So, you go into church from the front and fill the pews from the back. There will be seats marked out for individuals or couples from the same household. This reduces the risk of droplets being spread to people sitting in the pew. Although it is not a requirement in Northern Ireland at this time it would be helpful to wear a mask in church.

At the end of the service those on the gallery come down the stairs and exit through the main church door. The downstairs

congregation will leave from the back through the Wesley hall going out into the carpark through the fire door or on to Moat Street through the Wesley hall door.

At all times please keep a 2-metre distance between you and anyone from another household.

If you are unwell or feel vulnerable do not feel under pressure to come to Worship. We will be thinking about all our church family as we worship together. Robert has thoroughly cleaned the sanctuary; we will remove extra cushions from the church but not the cushions on the pews. Our wooden seats are a bit hard without the padding for even a short service but seven days in a well-ventilated area will ensure there is no risk for use the following Sunday. It might seem complicated, but you will be guided by directional signs and notices.

If you are online, there is a “Church at home’ section on the *irishmethodist.org* website with links to “Worship together while apart’, Sunday morning services with people contributing from their homes.

We look forward to meeting together again on the first Sunday in September, realising that these are strange times and plans change to meet government guidelines on a weekly basis I will send out notice of opening to you all at the end of August.

Keep safe,

Geraldine Chivers, Circuit Steward

Attitude

Today I can complain because the weather is rainy, or I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free.

Today I can feel sad that I don't have more money, or I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today I can grumble about my health, or I can rejoice that I am alive.

Today I can lament over all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up, or I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today I can cry because roses have thorns, or I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today I can whine because I have to go to work, or I can shout for joy because I have a job to do.

Today I can complain because I have to go to school, or I can eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich, new knowledge.

Today I can murmur dejectedly because I have to do housework, or I can feel honoured because the Lord has provided shelter for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping.

What today will be like is up to me. God has given me this day, and I get to choose what kind of a day I will have!

What will you choose to do today? Have a Great Day ...
unless you have other plans. (Anon)

Reflections: Who is my neighbour?

This question surfaced during the lockdown for Covid 19. So many, many people volunteered to help those who couldn't go out. They shopped, took elderly people to medical appointments, delivered food parcels, sewed scrubs and masks and generally were there for those around them when there was a need.

A couple of weeks ago, Jack was listening to the radio when a Muslim woman was asked how they defined a neighbour and she replied that the definition of a neighbour was someone who lived within forty houses to the left and forty houses to the right of where you live. Anyone living forty-one houses away was not a neighbour.

Following the death of George Floyd the 'Black lives matter' campaign took the question of who is my neighbour into the colour situation. But Jesus took it to the limits, beyond colour, race, creed and gender – even to those you consider to be your enemy. Then He turned the question back on the questioner and the expert in the law replied “He who had mercy on him”. And what was Jesus' response? - “Go and do likewise.” How?

Perhaps Paul can help. In Galatians he tells us “Carry one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ”

And in Romans, “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love . . . Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another.”

And Jesus went further “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

During lockdown we all have been neighbours, doing what we can for those who needed us , supporting the National Health Service, and if you were shielding, keeping in touch by ‘phone and encouraging one another. The love of Jesus is definitely abroad in our Church.

Maeve Lennie

Lockdown

What a nasty name! It conjures up all kinds of negative thinking: restrictions of movement and distancing from other people.

So what was I going to do to fill the gap of not seeing family and friends? Reading came to mind when I remembered receiving a book from a friend the previous week entitled “Stories from the Street” by Jim Rea.

I remembered Jim Rea as an ardent storyteller having heard him frequently on Radio Ulster ‘Thought for the Day’. With that in mind I picked up the book and commenced reading. The book did not disappoint. It covered the recollections of the author’s early years brought up in the fifties in a Christian home in North Belfast. In later years, his encounters with Rev. Sydney Callaghan, minister of Shankill Methodist Church who was training young men to become preachers. Jim was doubtful but the Minister did not give up on him.

Eventually hearing the call of God, Jim Rea entered training for the Ministry.

All the following stories are his personal experiences during his years in the Ministry in various parts of the country. Jim Rea is a ‘people person’, a man with a social conscience, caring for people and putting into practice his Christian beliefs.

The second book I read is entitled “Winter Blessings” written by the Irish writer Patricia Scanlan. Patricia gives the reader a glimpse into her life. Recollections from childhood and sharing her favourite poems, learnt by repetition in the classroom; personal stories that have inspired her and later suffering from chronic back pain and trying to make sense of it all. Winter has been a season of self-discovery and spiritual blessing in the writer’s life as she says something that was missing has now been found.

Both books I found to be compelling reading with thought-provoking contents. Perhaps Lockdown has another dimension to it!

Maureen Parks

Evolution rules, OK!

Around 1950, Muriel and I were two ‘provincial bumpkins’ visiting the Big Smoke of London for the first time. As an architectural student, I dragged Muriel around all the architectural wonders, ancient and modern, that time, energy and finances allowed. As a relief from this, we decided one Sunday afternoon to go to the Zoo. It was a hot summer’s day, and the Zoo was crowded.

After some time moving around the various animal compounds, we came upon a large crowd peering with great interest into a particular cage. We pushed forward, with the due humility of provincials, to see what the attraction was. At first, we could see nothing in the dark interior of the cage, but then we saw, in the gloom, two small yellow eyes peering out with what appeared to be a mixture of boredom and contempt. Gradually, we made out the outline of a gigantic 'King Kong' gorilla.

Hemmed in, wondering why all the interest, and reluctant to ask, it was some time before we gleaned that feeding time might be at hand. So, we waited expectantly with the others.

Suddenly the yellow eyes flickered a little, although the massive body did not move. Then we became aware that something was happening on the pathway to our right, and over the heads of the crowd we saw a large, old-fashioned black Rolls-Royce quietly approaching. Slowly the crowd shuffled aside to make way for the limousine, which gently came to rest near the front of the cage.

An immaculately uniformed chauffeur stepped down, opened the passenger door and handed down a fragile-looking, little old lady dressed in elegant, all-black, Victorian-style attire, complete with a lacy black hat.

As she approached the cage, the crowd parted deferentially to let her through, while King Kong stirred himself and began to move smoothly towards the front of the cage. She arrived at the safety barrier and delicately reached a small paper bag forward to the bars, from where two pink fingers accepted the gift with equal delicacy.

The lady immediately turned and withdrew to her ‘carriage’, which purred off as only a Rolls-Royce can do.

Meanwhile King Kong sat back, neatly opened the bag and took out his treat: a single chocolate éclair. This e proceeded to eat with obvious satisfaction, licking some extraneous cream from his upper lip on completion. He then retreated smoothly to his original position and closed his yellow eyes.

The crowd quietly dispersed without comment or noticeable reaction, perhaps pondering the Darwinian implications of the happenings, while Muriel and I retreated with wry smiles on our lips.

Michael Clarke

[Typical: she treats him like an animal, and then buys him occasional treats to make believe she still loves him! – Ed.]

Thought

Work has its place in life, but more important than work is thought. Take care of your thoughts. Every thought is a force which we generate for our good or evil.

The secret of the true life, the life that is life indeed, is living contact with the Deeper Self, the Hidden Self. How may this contact be established? Be still to know thy God!

All around us are restless men, rushing from one work to another and, in the process, kicking up dust; achieving nothing, knowing not whither they move. To them all

speaketh the word which giveth peace: “Come unto Me, ye that are restless, and I shall give you rest. Be still, be still!”

“What is the secret of your song?”, I asked the river, one day. And the river answered, “I would lose my song if you took the rocks away.” Life, too, is a river. As it flows on, it strikes against the rocks of suffering, sorrow, trial and tribulation. And this is just what should draw out its best music.

So, when the rains pour and the storms shriek and the thunders clap, let me still sing the song of thanksgiving: “I thank Thee, Lord. And I stretch my hands to Thee. No other friend I know!” And in my heart the Lord Himself will come to sing.

“Life is a maze, a puzzle-path”, said a young college student to me last evening. “I feel confused, confounded, with problems that baffle me, again and again. I am as a child lost in a fair. What may I do?”

And I said to him, “Brother, if only I become as a child, I have no more to do. The child trusts its mother and knows that the mother will always keep it safe from harm.”

Our difficulties and dangers begin with the moment we cease to be children. When I think I have grown up and am able to look after myself, I am faced with trials and tribulations, which overwhelm me and rob me of the true joy of living.

The child is singularly free from worries and cares, for it knows, beyond a shadow of doubt, that the mother is there to provide for all its needs. The mother anticipates the needs of her children and provides for them well in advance. We, who

think ourselves independent, create for ourselves a situation in which we have to slave from dawn to dusk. True freedom belongs to the child.

Are you anxious to reform others: your family, your community, your society, your country or your race? Then see that first you have reformed yourself, re-formed yourself, made yourself new through communion and prayer.

Do you aspire to be humble? Then do not think of yourself as full of sin and vice. Do not remind yourself of your faults and frailties, your defects and deformities. Do not belittle yourself. But forget yourself, and remember God!

(Contributed by the late and much-loved Peggy Bolster)

Rock and a Hard Place

Are we all familiar with the expression “Between a Rock and a Hard Place?” Apparently, the expression originated in the state of Arizona around 1917, when copper miners were faced with the difficult choice between keeping their poorly paid jobs, or losing them as a result of strike action.

This expression reminds us of the account in 2 Samuel 24 where King David had sinned against God in numbering the potential fighting men of Israel and Judah. Instead of putting his trust in God to fight his nation’s battles, he chose, rather, to place his confidence in the ‘might’ of his physical army. As a result of his rebellion, God gave him the difficult choice of one of three punishments:

- 1) Seven years of famine to hit the land.
- 2) Fleeing from his enemies for three months, or...
- 3) Three days of plague in the land.

David was indeed between ‘a rock and a hard place’ at this stage as he knew that any one of God’s choices could cost the lives of thousands of his subjects! After repenting and agonising over his decision, he said to the prophet Gad “...I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.” So, the Lord sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died (vs 14,5).

When we face difficult decisions or choices in our lives - instead of feeling helpless or hopeless, or attempting to work things out for ourselves, let us look to the Rock of Scripture for wisdom and guidance - and that Rock, of course, as we all know - is Christ. He is our ‘elder brother’ and the answer to our many life problems. Have a good week ahead and God bless.

‘Thought for the Day’ by John Magowan

Scottish Air Ferry

Michael Clarke submitted a very interesting article on the Silver Cities Air Ferry which operated for some years from Ards airport, but unfortunately space did not permit us to print it in full. Apologies to Michael for this truncated version of his article.

At the end of the war, seagoing vessels conveying cars to the Mainland did not have roll on/roll off facilities, making it a very cumbersome and time-consuming operation, when along came Silver Cities Airways with an air service from Northern Ireland to Castle Kennedy in Scotland. Their planes could carry three cars and twenty-three passengers, using the new Bristol 170 Freighter. What better way to find out what a trip was like than to read an account of Michael's journey with his wife-to-be?

My marriage to my future wife, Muriel, was to take place in March 1956 and we intended to spend our honeymoon touring Scotland and England using my recently purchased first vehicle – a Douglas Vespa Scooter. As an aviation enthusiast the air ferry seemed the only way to go (how romantic / daft can you be!), but for Muriel it would be her first flight. Nevertheless, she sportingly accepted the challenge (love conquers everything). The total cost of our flight was to be a hefty £7.

We arrived at Ards Airport and checked in at the terminal – a hutment¹, small but well fitted out, just off the Portaferry Road adjacent to the Flying Club premises. We were received informally but efficiently by neatly uniformed staff and asked to wait until the Freighter was unloaded and our vehicles put aboard.

No one bothered with us as we wandered about the apron watching the operations. The great beast with its 'mouth' open stood silently on the apron, barely 30 yards from the Terminal, in line with other light aircraft. Twin lattice ramps were wheeled out and placed against the Freighter's cargo

¹ I knew a Vicar who had a hutment on his allotment, where he worked in his vestments when the firmament permitted. He said he came over in a shipment, which was a cheap but not terribly comfortable way to travel. Ed.

deck, about five feet above the apron. Our Vespa with our suitcase strapped on was wheeled up one ramp and taken to the back of the cargo hold. We were sent to the passenger lobby which was quite roomy.

All securely fastened in and the doors closed, suddenly the silence was shattered as the two Hercules radial engines started up, one after the other. The engine note increased, and we started to move down to the Comber end of the runway. After a brief pause the engines came to full power and we accelerated along the runway. Soon we were in the air flying over Newtownards town and then passing over Donaghadee at 2000 feet. The engine noise and vibration lessened and steadied to a very acceptable level. After about twelve minutes we were over green fields again and after seventeen minutes we had landed. So after seventeen minutes in the air and twenty-five minutes terminal to terminal we had moved with our vehicle to Scotland. Compare this with half a day by sea ferry!

The ramps and steps were wheeled out and we were presented with our 'steed' ready to head off for Dumfries in good order.

Michael Clarke

The times, they are a-changing

The well-known American singer/song-writer Bob Dylan wrote a song in the early 1960s entitled "The times, they are a-changing".

In the last 60 years to the present day the times have changed immensely, and probably the biggest change has been this pandemic, the coronavirus, which has turned our everyday life upside down.

But there is a saying that “out of a bad situation can come some good”. That surely happened, because during lockdown we were blessed to have the NHS workers and other key workers who kept the country moving forward.

Also, pollution was way down, with empty skies and roads. Our gardens and the countryside improved, and the weather was great, with long, sunny days.

As Christians, there is one thing in our lives that never changes, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. To illustrate that, there is a lovely verse in Hebrews 13:8 that reads, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for ever”.

So, when you feel powerless, overwhelmed and anxious for the future, rest your focus on the One who is in complete control, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who never changes,

George Bolton

The Church Treasurer writes:

What a strange time this is for the church! But it is not the first time Donaghadee has been afflicted by a plague. In 1832, Donaghadee and many of the nearby towns were struck by cholera, which killed dozens of local people. The prospect of dying focused people’s minds on things eternal, and the numbers coming to church increased so much that we had to

build a new gallery to hold them (not the gallery we have now, because the whole church was rebuilt in 1849).

Cholera was as much of a mystery then as coronavirus is today. Nobody knew that it was passed on in infected water. It is a simple disease to control if you understand how it works, but lethal if you don't!

Well, we shall not all be crowding into the church, as they did in 1832. When we go back, we shall be keeping a distance from one another and observing all sorts of safety precautions. We may not even be allowed to sing! But it will be great to be able to worship together again, even if all we can do is hum along with the recorded hymns.

As Treasurer, I was concerned that a long period with no church services would mean a large hole in the church's finances. I thought we might lose half our income for six months. We have taken a hit, but it has not been nearly as bad as I expected. Not only have people generally kept up with their regular payments by Standing Order, but I have been amazed how many members have sent me their offerings in the post. Handwritten envelopes appear in my post-box every other day. Last month alone I received cheques for nearly £3,000.

I think that is an extraordinary tribute to the faithfulness of our congregation. No doubt the church will receive some catch-up offerings when services resume, as well. Just as a reminder, here are the four ways in which you can continue to give your financial support:

1. **Standing Orders:** This is the best option, because it is automatic and regular. The church's bank details are:

Donaghadee Methodist Church, Ulster Bank, 98-05-30
38788057.

2. **Electronic payment:** Transfer money to the church's account (above) quoting as reference "Envelope 29" or whatever your envelope number is.
3. **Cheque in the post:** Send a cheque (but preferably not cash) in the post to Donaghadee Methodist Church c/o the Treasurer at 5 Alexandra Road, BT21 0QD.
4. **FWO Envelopes:** Keep putting your offerings in the envelopes each week and store them up safely until you are able to come back to church.

It is important that we keep up the level of church income, because we have a small additional expense to meet this year. We are fortunate to have some of the time of the Rev. Louise McKee, to help out while Tom is spending much of his time on his Presidential duties, and we will be making a contribution to her stipend and expenses.

We are also discussing with a local contractor some urgently needed repairs to the main church building, where rain and damp are coming in on the carpark side. The cost is uncertain, at present, but it is likely to run into five figures. We need to get the main building fixed, however, before we can think about going out to tender for the proposed new church hall.

As regards those rebuilding plans, the Council has now received our planning application and is currently consulting local residents about our proposals. It will be several more months before we shall have a decision. As things stand, we have enough money to go ahead with the project, but we shall

need to take stock again in a few months' time, when we shall have a better idea of the effect the epidemic has had on the cost of building materials.

Thanks to all our members for your magnificent support through what could have been a difficult period for the church.

Kit Chivers

You cannot hide from God

*You cannot hide from God,
Though mountains cover you;
His eye our secret thoughts beholds,
His presence all our lives enfolds,
He knows our purposes untold:
You cannot hide from God.*

*You cannot hide from God,
No matter what you do;
He meets you at life's every turn,
He knows your thoughts that blight and burn,
He weeps when His own Son you spurn:
You cannot hide from God.*

*You cannot hide from God,
Though quietly you go;
He notes your footsteps ere they fall,
He hears your silent, heartfelt call,
His knowledge rules high over all:
You cannot hide from God.*

*You cannot hide from God.
This one thing you can do.
If you would save your sinful soul,
If you would be made pure and whole,
If you would reach the higher goal,
Your soul must hide in God.*

Alfred J. Ackley

