

KEEPING CONNECTED 4

Easter Sunday 12th April 2020



**JESUS IS RISEN!
JESUS IS ALIVE!**

**ON EASTER SUNDAY
LET'S CELEBRATE
TOGETHER**

**JESUS WILL
CONQUER THE
DARKNESS AND WE
WILL SEE OUT THE
STORMS OF LIFE
THROUGH HIS
POWER**

READINGS:

JONAH CH2

JONAH'S PRAYER

ACTS CH27 V13-26

THE STORM



PRAYERS

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever

Take a moment to pray for NHS staff, key workers, those affected by coronavirus, vulnerable children, the elderly or lonely, our Prime Minister and government officials, our families and friends, the world and church near and far- lift to God the people and places that lie heavy upon your heart

'He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay' Matthew ch28:v6

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

But now it's empty!

Fill a bin bag with as many empty things as possible. Get into the recycling and get the empty cartons of things the kids enjoy- talk about how much you all enjoy what's normally in there- but now it's empty!

Find some other things too, like a wallet or a pen with no ink tube- these things are usually really useful- but now it's empty!

Think about it:

What does empty normally mean- finished, no more use, done? We don't want lives that are empty, do we? We want nice things and good people to fill up our lives. Empty, most often, means bad

At Easter we find an empty tomb, but this time empty means good! We are pointed to Jesus who defeated death and rose again- at the empty tomb there is hope for our Saviour is mighty! The tomb also helps us to think about our lives. Sin empties our lives, it hurts or breaks relationships, and leads us to love stuff too much, which will never truly satisfy. The empty tomb points us to Jesus who, if we trust in him, will live in our hearts, fill them

up, cleanse us from our sin and help us to live life the way it ought to be lived!

Pray: *'Father, thank you that Jesus overcame death at Easter. Help us to live each day remembering that he is alive and that he is bigger than anything that might make us scared. Thank you that Jesus is our hero and always with us. Amen*



DEVOTIONAL

Hope in the storm

Forgive me if you have heard me tell this story before. I find it very powerful at the best of times but on this particular Easter Sunday, with the world the way it is just now, I felt it particularly relevant. I don't recall where I heard it first but it has remained a part of me ever since. It goes something like this...

There was a famous painter, a man of celebrated talent, yet extremely private. One day, rather unusually, the artist invited a lone student to come and watch him paint. The protégé sits in quiet awe at the back of the studio as he watches his master perform his craft. The canvas slowly transforms, shapes, shades, strokes become images and eventually a scene manifests before his eyes.

The picture is skilfully painted, yet what it displays is cold and bleak. A scene of winter, a forest bereft of leaves being battered by the harsh and unrelenting gales of an unfriendly storm. In the centre of this lifeless wood lies a little hut, made of stone, an uneven and half-finished path leading up to it. The hut looked so lost and forgotten in the darkness, slightly leaning over and pitiful to behold. The student thought to himself- how is it that the little shack still stands? The master dispenses with his brush, retreats back from the canvas, hands on hips he observes his creation. The student gazes alongside him, a scene dominated by winter and cold reigns before them.

As he begins to speak, the master leans forward, with the smallest of brush and the tiniest of flicks he paints the glow of light within the window of the little hut. It was as if warmth flowed out from the painting now, the whole perspective of the observer was totally flipped on its head. No longer was it the trees, wind or grey vista that drew the eye but the light, the light that burned while the storm raged, the light that endured throughout the wild uncertainty, the light so small in comparison to the winter around it, but yet so much greater....Easter Sunday is that light.

A clever, smart talking, magical, handyman's son from a backwater dies 2000 years ago- how can that contend with coronavirus, the big political crises of our modern world, or even our worries and life struggles. The point is of course is that Jesus overcame death, his teaching was not just smart discourse but the revelation of the truth of God, his actions were not magic but a demonstration of the power of God. In Christ there is truth and power, his resurrection displays that and therefore what seems like a little light is actually that which will burn undiminished until the darkness flees, the light neither understood nor overcome. While Easter Sunday points to the hope of the Second Coming and the eventual, once and for all defeat of the darkness, it also points to the fact that the truth and power of God is there for us in Christ, that there is strength in that, strength to carry us, to give us hope and portion, in our present storms. Share in Paul's confidence, do not be afraid, listen to him, as by knowing this very same power within himself, he says to the sailors 'keep up your courage!'

Easter allows us to remember our low estate but also our great hope and the wonderful unity that there is in those two things. Today, in our brokenness and distress, join with Jonah in proclaiming that 'salvation comes from the Lord', join with the angels in proclaiming that 'He is Risen!', join with Paul as he holds on to faith as the billows roll, and join with me, as together, through trust in our living Saviour Jesus, we will see the storm pass, the clouds part, and feel the sun upon our face.

***God sent His son, they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal and forgive
He lived and died to buy my pardon
An empty grave is there to prove my saviour lives***

***Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives***

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CREGAGH KEEPING CONNECTED

Each Friday morning I will email out an update like this one, which will include a devotional, children's activity, prayer points and readings. These can be hand delivered or posted if necessary, if you hear of anyone who is not receiving a copy, or if you know of someone outside of our congregation who might benefit from receiving one please let us know.

MR EDWARD BABES

It is with sincere regret that I report the death of Mr. Edward Babes, formally of 41 Stirling Avenue. Please remember Ted's widow Maude and the wider family in your prayers.

PRAYER

The fortnightly Prayer Link will be sent out as normal, if you have any prayer requests please pass them on, if you do not receive the Prayer Link but would like to via email or printed copy please let me know.

BIBLE STUDY

If you would be interested in joining our Zoom Bible study group please email me. We meet on Mon evenings at 7pm, however another time can be arranged, or another group formed if required.

MESSAGE FROM CHURCH TREASURER

Some of our members have expressed an interest in contributing to church funds via bank transfer/standing order. To date, 40 members are contributing to WFO in this way, and 30 to the Building Fund.

Despite the church's temporary closure, the General Fund is still incurring approximately 75% of our normal expenditure and the continued support of individual church members is therefore very much appreciated.

If you have not already thought about giving by this method, please give it your consideration. However these are difficult times for many and no one should feel under any obligation to do so. I would stress that Cregagh has sufficient reserves to cope with our temporary closure.

Please note that, if you decide to make a bank transfer or standing order, it is important that you are identified by your name and also, preferably, by your WFO number on the church's bank statement. If you contribute to the Building Fund or CPC Missions, I would also commend doing so by this method. If you prefer, please consider sending a cheque to me by post at 5 Ardenlee Avenue BT6 0AA (for either WFO or Missions). Cheques for the Building Fund may be sent to Richard Molyneaux at 14 Meadow Way, Crawfordsburn BT19, 1JJ.

Bank details are available from me (at 90453829 or 07513596531).

Take care and keep safe- Gordon Dunlop.

GET IN TOUCH

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if I can be of any help whatsoever, if you need messages or even if you would just like a chat.

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