

REEMERGING TOGETHER 2

Pentecost 31st May 2020



AT PENTECOST WE ARE REMINDED OF THE GOD WHO KEEPS HIS PROMISES. WHEN DOUBT AND WORRY TAKE HOLD REMEMBER THAT GOD LIVES WITHIN US BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WE NEED NOT FEAR

READINGS:

PSALM 23

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

MATTHEW CH11 V1-19

JESUS AND JOHN



PRAYERS

*Breathe in me O Holy Spirit that my thoughts may all be holy;
Act in me O Holy Spirit that my works, too, may be holy;
Draw my heart O Holy Spirit that I love but what is holy;
Strengthen me O Holy Spirit to defend that is holy;
Guard me then O Holy Spirit that I always may be holy.
St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)*

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

'Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken.' Psalm 55 v22

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

Pack up your troubles! Find an empty school bag and collect a number of heavy items that will fit into it, perhaps books or kitchen stuff, as well as a glass of water which will be used later on.

Think about it: What makes people worry? Ask the children what things they sometimes worry about. Write a list together and as you do put each item into the schoolbag, one at a time. **Do it:** Ask the children to try and put the bag on their back, lift it and go for a walk, it will hopefully be too heavy or will soon become so when they wear it for a while. **Read:** Read Philippians ch4 v6&7 and write it out nicely on the back of the list of worries. Set the page out with the verse facing up and read it a few times, while lifting the heavy items back out of the bag again.

Jesus tells us to trust that he will do what he said he will do. Jesus made many promises, it tells us in the Bible that he will never leave his people, he will always be with them. Jesus tells us not to worry because we never face anything alone, when we have lots of worries it weighs us down like a big heavy bag and we can't live the type of life that we ought to. Today we remember Pentecost, the time when the Holy Spirit came, Jesus promised that this would happen and it did! Even better than that Jesus also promised that everyone who follows him, will have the Holy Spirit live in their heart and that is why they are never alone and need not let worry control them. Take a sip of water each, taking a drink is like trusting Jesus and as a result the living water, which is the Spirit goes inside of us, the Spirit is like water that stays within us forever. **Pray:** 'Father thank you for your Son and for the Holy Spirit. Help us when we are worried, to trust that you will bring everything together for good. Forgive us for when we forget your promises or fail to believe in you. We ask that the Holy Spirit would guide us to deeper faith in you. Amen'



DEVOTIONAL

I'm worried because I doubt and I doubt because I'm worried

Shakespeare famously wrote “*Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt*” While the playwright was referring to doubting personal abilities and skills the core message is one that extends much further, our doubts lead us to miss out on the good of things, they rob us of what we ought to have enjoyed or allow fear to sour that which was intended to be sweet. Doubt, fear and worry are a dangerous group of companions in life, yes

they can at times be used in positive ways but if they take control of our lives and circumstances then we find ourselves broken and anxious rather than whole and confident.

The passage we read from Matthew’s gospel is one that hits home to me in a very personal and profound way. Imagine the scene, John the Baptist languishing in prison, uncertain of his future, his life on the line. Perhaps you have had too much time to sit and think of late, that was certainly the problem for John, in his cell he spent time reliving and revisiting his ministry, wondering ‘*what was it all for?*’. It is often said that Jesus acted in a way that was contrary to how the Messiah was expected to behave, that is true but we don’t often consider how earthshattering that was to so many people, John chief among them. John’s whole life had been set aside so that he could path the way for the Messiah coming, to achieve this he lived the dedicated and gruelling life of a prophet in the wilderness, mocked and revered in equal measure. It would be all worth it though when the Messiah would come, he who would bring the Kingdom and destroy the enemies of God’s people, before sitting on the throne himself as the true king. Yet as John sat imprisoned, he heard the stories of Jesus’ teaching, healing and ministering to ‘sinners’ and began to doubt, he dispatches some of his disciples to go and ask Jesus, ‘*Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?*’ Jesus’ sends John’s disciples back with an answer showing that he was the one long promised in the Scriptures and continues to display his authority through his teaching to the people. What strikes me however when I read this account is that of all people, the last person you would expect to succumb to fear and doubt would be John the Baptist, but here we see it happen. John stumbles just as we all do.

When doubt and fear poke at us we must remind ourselves that even the best of us struggle from time to time and therefore we ought not to beat ourselves further down by being too hard on ourselves, we all falter, we all lose heart, we all feel scared and uncertain when things don’t work out as we had believed they would. Yet we cannot allow fear and doubt, or worry as it so often presents itself in our lives, to have the final say over us. Pentecost is a reminder of a God who keeps his promises, a God who brings together the scattered and gives purpose to the aimless. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come and through that coming the church took off with a message of hope that would conquer even the darkest doubt and fiercest fear. Now is the time for us to be reminded of this Jesus who has among his many promises, assured us that he will be with us, living within us, and that a time is coming when every tear will be wiped away and all wrongs set right, but for now by the work of the Spirit he is here to share our burdens and take our worries.

Read the 23rd Psalm again, really read it, the fact that we know it so well means we often miss its true beauty- hear in those words a true and life changing beauty and let them lift you, rebuke you, encourage you or bless you in whatever way- **Remember** *the Lord is your shepherd, he will lead you beside quiet waters, he will restore you soul, he will guide you in paths of righteousness- So fear no evil for he is with you- he will comfort you, prepare you a table and anoint you- So your cup will overflow, goodness and mercy will be yours and you will belong to the Lord, today and indeed forever.*

Lord of the Church, we pray for our renewing:

Christ over all, our undivided aim.

**Fire of the Spirit, burn for our enduing,
wind of the Spirit, fan the living flame!**

We turn to Christ amid our fear and failing,

the will that lacks the courage to be free,

the weary labours, all but unavailing,

to bring us nearer to what a Church should be.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CREGAGH REEMERGING TOGETHER

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.

OPEN CHURCH

The church building will be open on Monday 10am-12noon, 6-8pm and Fridays 10am-12noon for private prayer. A one-way system, social distancing and hygiene procedures will be in effect. The facility to drop off church envelopes is also now available during these times. During Monday evenings and Friday mornings the organ will be played for a time.

PRAYER

The fortnightly Prayer Link will be sent out this incoming week, 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. I would encourage you to take part or contact me about setting up another group at an alternative time.

GARDEN CHAT OR VISIT

If you would like to 'book in' for a socially distanced chat in the side garden of the church on a Tues or Thurs afternoon please contact me, individuals or groups of up to five people are very welcome. Also if you would like a socially distanced visit in your own front garden, I am conducting these on a Wed afternoons, please get it touch.

CHRISTIAN AID

Thank you for your donations to the work of Christian Aid, however our collection this year has been much less than in previous years, if you would still like to contribute please leave a contribution marked Christian Aid in the offering box, send a cheque to the church with addition note marking in as for Christian Aid, or contact Gordon (028 90 453 829) about making an electronic payment.

MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Moderator-Designate, Rev David Bruce, will be installed as the new PCI Moderator on Monday evening, 1 June, in a special event which will be livestreamed from Assembly Buildings in Belfast at 7pm. Check out the PCI website for more details

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.