

KEEPING CONNECTED AGAIN! 6



Love God and Love our Neighbour

21st February 2021 1st Sunday of Lent

**THIS WEEK IS THE
SECOND OF OUR TWO
GUEST CONTRIBUTORS-
REV. COLIN MCCORMACK
IS THE FORMER RECTOR
OF THE PARISH OF
CLONALLON AND
WARRENPOINT WITH
KILBRONEY**

READINGS:

PSALM 139

**O LORD YOU HAVE
SEARCHED ME**

PHILIPPIANS CH1 V12-30

PAUL'S CHAINS

PRAYERS

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments, and also that by thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass out time in rest and quietness; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

◆ Take a moment to pray for all those affected by coronavirus in whatever way, the NHS and frontline workers, the world and church near and far- lift to God the people and places that lie heavy upon your heart

*"But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation."*

Psalm 13 v5

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

That can't be true!

Pick someone famous and write down a number of things about them, make sure your list has at least two things that are untrue. Read out the list, telling the kids all about the person in question, make sure that the untrue things are believable!

Ask them if they believe everything you have told them and then spend a while reading about the person, finding out what is true and what is false.

In life we are always looking for the catch, the bit that is wrong, the part that is broken. We are prone to disbelieve people rather than

count on what they say. This is because the world is so impacted by sin that lies and half-truths come so naturally to all of us.

God is not like that, he keeps his promises and we can trust in him and what he says, write down some of the things God promises us and ask him to help you love the truth so that you can live in a way that people can trust you too!

Pray: 'Father, thank you that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life- help us to trust him and live for him, so that our lives would bring you glory, Amen,'





DEVOTIONAL

Paul in Lockdown!

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” Philippians 1:21

In addressing this letter to the Christians in Philippi, the Apostle Paul is languishing in prison (probably in Rome). Not for the first time did he undergo incarceration for his faith in Christ. He describes himself as a *“prisoner in chains”* [1:13]. And if he was not too familiar with what we now call *self isolation*, he certainly had firsthand knowledge of an experience familiar to us all – **lockdown!** I suspect that such

encounters would drive many of us into the depths of despair. Yet the whole tenor of the letter disseminates a spirit of hope, contentment and joy! **So what are the factors that have led to,; this outburst of overflowing vitality?**

Perhaps the key passage that explains, not only Paul’s understanding and outlook, but also something of his inner disposition, is to be found in chapter 1 beginning at verse 21. It begins thus: **“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”**. However the discourse suddenly develops from a firm, positive affirmation towards what seems to be introspection: *“If I am to go on living in the body this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two -----*. So what is happening here? Clearly Paul is not in a position to make a “choice”. Rather this is a form of inward reflection: the apostle firmly believes that Christ is with him in prison; but equally he is passionately convinced that if he were to die, he would exist eternally in the presence of Christ - in modern parlance: a *win/win* situation! For Paul, whether in life or death, to be in Christ is the very kernel of life itself! For Christ is his life. It was the risen Christ who met and challenged him on the Damascus road. It was through Christ that the way of the cross was revealed to him; that with his (Jesus’) death came the knowledge that he was justified i.e. that he stands in the presence of God the Father, no longer condemned by the guilt and power of sin. But that knowledge is not simply an intellectual understanding of his position before God. No! It embodies a relationship to the Son of God; a relationship initiated by Jesus himself (3:12b) Paul made the radical decision to give up his past in order to “gain Christ”. Why? -*“for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”*. And for all of this, through knowing Christ, he desires to *“become like him in his death”* (3:10) in order to *attain the resurrection from the dead*. (3:1).

At the very outset the Apostle addresses the Philippian Christians as “saints” –and without exception! (1:1). **To be called by God is to be called a saint i.e. set apart from the world for God’s will and purposes. Through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, all who repent and turn to Christ in faith are by divine right beneficiaries of all the blessings of the kingdom** – not least the guarantee that they too can say: “for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. No wonder Paul can say to the Philippians: **“From the first day until now, I am confident that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”** [1:6]. He, of course could address this to them, because he saw clear signs of spiritual development and maturity (see 1:3 – 6). How powerful and reassuring this is! Through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. Our standing before God the Father ultimately does not depend upon our religious background, moral “uprightness” or even our spiritual experiences. No! Our standing is built upon the foundation of the Promises of God and revealed throughout scripture and supremely in His beloved Son. Are we therefore able to see the overwhelming relevance of these great truths in the light of the ongoing pandemic crisis? In the midst of our questionings, our mood swings, our fits of depression - Where will it all end? How much longer can I cope? Remember the promises of God and live in faith and hope!

**For me to live is Christ ,to die is gain
To hold his hand and walk his narrow way
There is no peace, no joy, no thrill
Like walking in his will
For me to live is Christ,to die is gain**

**Now once my heart was full of sin and shame
Then someone told me Jesus came to save
When he said "come home to me"
He set my poor heart free
For me to live is Christ ,to die is gain.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

KEEPING CONNECTED AGAIN!

An update, like this one, will be emailed out each Friday and delivered to folk who don't have internet connection or an easy way of accessing it. Please feel free to share around!

NOTICE OF BEREAVEMENT

It is with sadness and regret that I record the death of Mr. Harry Hamilton, please do remember his wife Evelyn in your prayers in these challenging days.

'PREACHING TO THE CHOIR'

Each Thursday evening at 6:30pm, while we are closed for services, we will upload a recording of a little midweek- '*Preaching to the Choir*'. This will include a few musical items, prayer, reading and devotion. This is not a replacement of our Sunday service, yet is accessed the same way via the website or YouTube, but an additional opportunity to share in for the next while.

OPEN CHURCH

The church building is open for private prayer on Fridays 10am-12noon. There is also the facility to drop off offering envelopes.

PRAYER LINK

While Morning Watch cannot meet at the moment the Prayer Link will still be circulated, if you have any prayer requests please pass them along and if you would like a copy of the Prayer Link emailed or delivered please ask

ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

The Zoom Bible study will meet again on Monday, 22nd February at 7pm, this season we are exploring the Gospel of Luke together, everyone is very welcome!

BIBLE CLASS

Bible Class will continue on Zoom on Sunday mornings at 11:30am, all p7s and up are welcome- if there is anyone who hasn't joined in yet it would be great to have you, please get in touch.

CHURCH FLOWERS

We would thank those members of the congregation who provide church flowers each Sunday. Unfortunately, since Sunday 10th January and until church services can resume church flowers are not required.

We are aware that some of the flowers are in memory of a loved one or to mark an occasion and this is regretted but hopefully these dates can be honoured next year.

As soon as we have a date when services can again be held a member of our Flower Arranging team will be in touch. Church flowers on Sunday 21st February would have been:

Mrs A Gamble, Ballymoney 'In memory' (Pedestal) And Mr and Mrs D Jackson, Church Road 'Birthday memories of Claire' (Sanctuary)

Kick Start



Kick Start is an on-line course produced by CAP for people who have faced unemployment, shrinking incomes, worry or loss during this pandemic. It gives you an opportunity to begin to deal with some of the physical & emotional impact COVID-19 has had on your life.

The course will run for 4 Tuesday evenings beginning on TUESDAY 2 MARCH at 7.30pm. Sign up for the sessions that interest you which include:

- WEEK 1 Anxiety and Worry
- WEEK 2 Handling Loss
- WEEK 3 Breaking Unhealthy Habits
- WEEK 4 Lifting Financial Pressure

The course will be delivered over Zoom. To book your place, please contact James at jamesmyles@capuk.org or 07599 379839 by Wed 24 February.

VALENTINE QUIZ ANSWERS

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1.	D
2.	A
3.	B
4.	B
5.	C
6.	C
7.	C
8.	A
9.	B
10.	C

GET IN TOUCH

Please do not hesitate to get in touch

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