

KEEPING CONNECTED AGAIN! 9

14th March 2021 4th Sunday of Lent



**ON MOTHERING SUNDAY
LET'S REMEMBER THE
COURTYARD OF THE
TABERNACLE- HELPING US
TO SEE THE HOLINESS OF
GOD, THE BEAUTY OF THE
LAW AND THE WONDER OF
CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH**

READINGS:

JOHN CH10 V1-21

**THE GOOD
SHEPHERD**

EXODUS CH38 V9-20

THE COURTYARD



draw something nice you have done together or things you both like, while you do this think about the times that you didn't do what she asked and you didn't honour her, say sorry and tell her that you love her. Maybe you could write that in the card too! Make another Mother's Day card, with your Mum, this time for the church, maybe draw something or someone in the church you miss, but remember to draw lots of people too, after all that's what the church really is. So, today remember your two Mums- your earthly Mummy and your spiritual Mummy, the church. Thank God for them both and ask him to help you love and honour them in all that you do.

Pray: 'Father, thank you for our Mum and for all Mums, help us to all be parents and children to each other as a part of your church, so that we can all grow in following Jesus. Amen'

PRAYERS

'Father, we give you all the glory and the honour for all that you bring into our lives each day, even in these times when we can't clearly understand your ways. Shine your light in us, through us, over us. Help us to make a difference in this world as we live for you. Set your way before us so that we may seek the holiness and purity revealed to us in your word. We are sorry for the times we try to walk our own path and go our own way, forgive and strengthen us a family of believers, so we may help each other to follow Jesus. 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

"I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy."
Leviticus ch11 v45

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

My Two Mums!

The Bible tells us that we are to honour our parents, we are to love and obey them. In fact, in the Ten Commandments, it tells us that if everybody had honoured their parents the whole land in which the people lived would be much better off!

On Mothering Sunday, we are reminded of our Mum but also about our spiritual mother, the church. Like our Mum we are called to love the church and everyone who is part of it, seeing them as our brothers and sisters, mums and dads, aunties and uncles, a big group of people following Jesus together.

You have probably already bought or even made your Mum a card for today but time to make two new cards, this time with your Mum! Make a Mother's Day card with your Mum, maybe



DEVOTIONAL

The Courtyard of the Mother Church

The Courtyard and fencing of the Tabernacle performed many different functions besides its practical use of protecting the Tabernacle and surrounding area from being unclean. It acted as a visual sermon pointing to truths that the Israelites were to grasp, but also pointing forward to that which we as Christians can appreciate.

For the Israelites it demonstrated the nature of holiness, that which was set apart from the ordinary, and that which was pure, as the white linen clearly displayed. This is the character of God, holy and pure- separate from the common unclean sinfulness of the world. The people were therefore called ***'to be holy for the Lord your God is holy'***, through the presenting of sacrifice and the effort to live in faithfulness exhibited their desire to do as God had commanded and as the Tabernacle Courtyard reminded them. This was reenforced by the symbology of the Law, it creates a framework around God, a safety barrier that ought not be strayed from, again the nature of the Law, given by a holy God is highlighted by the Courtyard.

Jesus, as he often does, picks up on the image of the Old Testament, in explaining his nature. Just as there was one gate to enter the Courtyard, he refers to himself as ***'the gate or door'*** (John ch10 v9) and ***that 'no one gets to the Father except through me'*** (John ch14 v6), Jesus is the perfect fulfilment of the Law, the perfect sacrifice and therefore he who leads his people to the holiness and purity of his Father. We are not called to come with animal sacrifice any longer, but we are to come and present to the Great High Priest an offering of faith and desire to live it out, to obey and honour God as the Israelites were to do.

As we meet Mothering Sunday today, we of course wish to honour of Mums and thank God for them, even if, for some of us, it is only the memory of them that we treasure. Yet the story of Mothering Sunday is not that of the relatively new 'Mother's Day' that really is nothing more than a pleasant commercial initiative. Practiced in one form or another from 8th Century, by the 16th Century it was commonplace for people to return to their local 'mother churches' for a service held on Laetare Sunday. A person's 'mother church' was either the church where they were baptized, the local parish church, or the nearest cathedral, which was considered as the 'mother church' of all the parish churches in that particular area. Those who did this were commonly spoken of as having gone 'mothering'. This further developed with Mothering Sunday becoming a day when domestic servants were given a day off to visit their 'mother church', usually with their own Mothers and other family members and then to share a meal with them. On the journey to church, they would pick wild flowers which they would present when they arrived to honour their 'mother church', in this history it is not hard to see many of the roots of the practices that are often enjoyed on our present-day 'Mother's Day'.

This ties together with the grasping of the nature of the church, the church is not a building alone but the family of believers, that's what Mothering Sunday recognised, that as people returned to their 'mother church' they did so being reminded that they belonged to something larger than themselves, the place where they were baptised and began their journey of faith acting as a visual sermon of God's promises to them and also that they were part of a wider family each sharing in each other's story of faith. The church, then and now acts as something of a courtyard, a place where the people of God can gather together, surrounded by his teaching, holy and acceptable before him because of the work of Christ. While we cannot yet physically get together for corporate worship, it is comforting to know that this bond endures between us all as a tie that binds, we are the church and we are all in this together as a family of believers. As mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of one another, we are called, as members of the church to come with our offering of faith in Jesus, spurring each other on in pursuing a life which honours and glorifies God.

***God of grace and God of glory,
come among us in Your power;
crown Your ancient Church's story,***

***bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour.***

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!

'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 meets on Monday evenings 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 confirmed date when services can again be held a member of our Flower Arranging team will be in touch.

Church flowers on Sunday 14th March would have been:

(Pedestal) Mrs M Hewitt, Brackenridge, Carrickfergus

(Sanctuary) Mr H Gibson, Hindsdale Park and Miss P Gibson, Thiepval Avenue

BUILDING FUND UPDATE

Following on from the update last week please see below the Building Fund report in full.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

PCI has released the following statement to be shared with members:

'The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) encourages all of its members to actively consider receiving vaccination against Covid-19 when it is offered to them. While recognising that this is ultimately a matter of personal judgement, PCI neither discourages its members from taking up the vaccine offer nor is it supportive of those who seek to discourage the take-up of the vaccine.'

RECOMMENCEMENT OF IN PERSON SERVICES OF WORSHIP

PCI have announced the provisional date for the recommencement of in person services of worship as Good Friday 2nd April. This will hopefully be confirmed on 18th March. More information will follow in the coming weeks.

MR BOBBY IRVINE

Given lockdown and the restrictions on the number able to attend Bobby's funeral we want to give the wider congregation the chance to contribute in Bobby's memory. Bobby was a great stalwart of Cregagh and was indeed close to all our hearts. Bobby's wider family have offered the opportunity for donations in his memory to be made to the Building Fund. If you have not contributed and would like to do so, please pass on your donation in the usual way, marking it appropriately as a contribution in Bobby's memory. Thank you.

GET IN TOUCH

Please do not hesitate to get in touch:

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BUILDING FUND REPORT 2020

This is our seventeenth annual report as Building Fund Convenors, and once again we extend our grateful thanks to everyone who contributed to the Fund during an unprecedented year through faithful giving by envelope or standing order, Harvest Gift Day, and by donation or supporting organised fund-raising activities. We are pleased to report that total income for 2020, from all streams of income, amounted to £66,629.27, which given the restrictions placed on worship and fund-raising, is magnificent. Your unwavering support in difficult times is very much appreciated, evidenced by the growing number of members making their contribution by standing order. We now have 39 households contributing this way, compared to 25 last year. We also extend thanks to everyone who left envelopes at 'Open Church' or posted to Church, or to Richard & myself.

For the record income is itemised as follows :	(£)
Envelopes	26,886.08
Standing Orders	14,080.00
Fund-Raising & Donations	10,064.40
Harvest Gift Day	5,454.00
Gift Aid	<u>10,144.89</u>
	66,629.37

This reflects a 1.95% increase in giving, year-on-year, by envelope & standing order, which, given the most unprecedented of times, is a tremendous outcome. We also had a bumper Harvest Gift Day which yielded £5,454, including a most generous contribution of £900 from two former members. Yes, it is a fact that overall income was down by £19,000 or 22.5%, but this is due entirely to the restrictions on fund-raising which coincidentally resulted in a shortfall of £19,000 on revenue from fund-raising activities, year-on-year. Gift Aid remains a most welcome source of revenue from the Treasury and we received £10,145 during 2020.

Once again we extend our grateful thanks to all the organisations and groups who supported the Fund during the year. A full list of these donations is provided at the end of the Report and we thank members, and friends of the congregation, for their kind and generous donations. We also thank members who kindly supported the Fund at a time of bereavement, and continue to do so as an act of remembrance. Regrettably the congregation lost a number of much loved servants in 2020 and we extend our heartfelt sympathy to the grieving families, and to those who kindly requested that donations in memory, or in lieu of flowers, should be given to the Fund. Two bequests were received from the estate of Mrs Moyrah Flanagan & Mr Alan Moore, and we remember them both with great affection. Bobby Irvine passed to Glory on 29 December and as a congregation we give grateful thanks for knowing one of the most humblest and unassuming of men who was devoted to 'Cregagh', and gave tirelessly of his time and energy in so many ways. He was a WFO Secretary for many years and a faithful supporter of the Building Fund. His optimism, penchant for positivity, gentleness and generosity of spirit marked him out as someone special, and he will be greatly missed by all his friends in Cregagh. The Catering Committee, led by Anne Graham and Beth McNair, continue to kindly donate the proceeds from the provision of refreshments following the 'Services of Thanksgiving' though this service has been suspended due to the pandemic.

As we alluded earlier, fund-raising during 2020 was severely curtailed, but we managed to hold the Model Railway Exhibition in mid-March, just prior to the first lockdown. Grateful thanks are extended to David Gillespie and everyone involved in the event which raised £1,251.50. The Scouts/Cubs raised £285 from a sponsored walk and we extend thanks to Carolyn McMillan and all the boys who took part. We also extend thanks for the continuing support from the Craft Stall & Flower Power, led by Maureen Mulligan; David Gillespie's transfer of video content to the DVD format; and the Coin Jar.

As we outlined in the 2019 Report, through prudent financial management it has only been necessary to draw down a loan of £264,000 from Ulster Bank to complete the building project, and at 31 December 2020 the balance stood at £129,565. It remains a key objective of the Finance Committee to strive to repay the loan, in full, as soon as practicable. In terms of expenditure we spent £4,638 including property insurance and the Manse rates bill which is now within the bailiwick of the Building Fund.

At the end of another year we want to express our grateful thanks to the wider team for their help and support in managing the Fund:

- Gordon Dunlop for his guidance, support and encouragement, and sterling work as Treasurer;
- Heather Sharpe for the great work she continues to do on gift aid and standing orders;
- Robert McNair for his continuing help and oversight of all information technology matters, and data relating to the Annual Report;
- Dawn Johnston for her professional guidance and encouragement; and
- All the members of the Count teams who faithfully counted the money every week up until mid-March when lockdown was imposed. A very special word of thanks is therefore extended to Heather Sharpe who carried out the role of counting and lodging monies with the Bank during the first lockdown, and to Karen & Jim McCurry who took over responsibility for this very important task last July. It is very much appreciated by us and the Finance Committee.

Since the Fund for the restoration and refurbishment project was established in 2008 the total amount raised at 31 December 2020 stood at almost £1,060,000 which is magnificent, and demonstrates the continuing commitment of this congregation to serve Christ on this site.

As at 31 December 2020 the balance of the Ulster Bank Building Fund account was £62,140.99.

2020 Fund-Raising and Donations :	(£)
Donations	5,030.00
Model Railway Exhibition	1,251.50
Bequest Mrs M Flanagan	900.00
In Memory	800.00
Bequest Mr A Moore	450.00
Catering Committee	450.00
Handbell Choir	350.00
PW	300.00
Scouts	285.00
Mothers & Toddlers	100.00
Craft Stall	61.00
Flower Power	50.00
Transfer Video/DVD	20.00
Coin Jar	16.90

Richard & Elaine Molyneux
Joint Building Fund Convenors