

KEEPING CONNECTED AGAIN! 8

7th March 2021 3rd Sunday of Lent



THE LAVER POINTS US TO THE POWER OF CHRIST'S BLOOD TO CLEANSE US FROM SIN. IT ALSO REMINDS US OF THE WONDER OF SCRIPTURE, WASHING OUR MINDS AND HEARTS AS WE STRIVE TO LIVE FOR GOD

READINGS:

REVELATION

CH7 V9-17

THE MULTITUDE

EXODUS CH38 V8

BRONZE LAVER



PRAYERS

'Father, thank you for the Bronze Laver, that place of cleansing, that place of washing and renewal, that place that points to the work of Jesus and the power of the Scriptures. Help us to come again to Christ, to remember that in Jesus we have been washed with blood that would make us white as snow. Help us to love the Bible, to ponder and delight in it, to have our minds and hearts washed by it each day. Forgive us when we falter and bless us O God to be those who feast on, and live by, your word. 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

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path."

Psalm 119 v105

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

Read all about it!

The Bible is really really important, it is God's word written and has been given to us to help us understand who God is and how to live for him. If you don't already, it's time to start reading the Bible often, a little bit each day is the best way. Reading the bible is like washing our hearts and minds so we can love God and others much better. Get a Bible out and open the contents page, look at all the different books, there are 66 split up into two bits, the Old and New Testaments, the Old tells us about what happen before Jesus came and the New tells us about him coming and what happened after. The big story of the whole Bible tells us lots of important things that make a difference to our lives each day. From wee books like 3 John

and Philemon, to huge books like Isaiah and Jeremiah there is lots to find out. Get yourself a note book and plan to read a bit of the Bible every day, start with a gospel like Luke or Matthew and read a chapter or a few verses each day, write down three things- **1. Something you didn't know before 2. Something you knew but had forgotten 3. Something you didn't understand.** If you finish the gospel- keep reading! There is plenty of Bible left! Feel free to ask your folks to pass on any questions you have to me or if you want to talk about good ways to read the whole bible I'd be happy to give you some ideas! **Pray:** *'Father, thank you for the Bible that is a lamp to our feet to show us how to walk your ways, help us to love the Bible, to read it and to live by what it says. Amen'*



DEVOTIONAL

A Basin and Book for Washing

The Laver, or Basin, was a large bowl filled with water located halfway between the brazen altar and the entrance to the Tabernacle. Although God did not give specific measurements for the Laver, it was to be made entirely of bronze, as with the altar we are reminded of a symbol of judgement, and as the altar displayed the need for sacrifice to be made prior to

approaching God, the Laver demonstrated the requirement to be cleansed. The priests, therefore, were to wash their hands and their feet in it before entering the Holy Place, representing their desire to walk and act in a way that honours God and to be seen as clean before his holy Presence. The Laver was located in a prominent place and stood as a reminder, not only to the priests, but to everyone, that humanity need cleansing before approaching God. While the priests atoned for their sins through sacrifice at the altar, they still cleansed themselves at the Laver before serving in the Tabernacle, so that they would be pure and not bare the judgement of a holy God.

There are two vivid pictures painted for us as we gaze at the Laver, the first is the concept that we are washed and made clean by the precious blood of Jesus, look to the scene witnessed by John in Revelation ch7, the great multitude washed by the blood of Christ reminds us that through our faith in Jesus and his saving work, that promise is ours, that we are washed and cleansed by the Saviour's blood: ***'Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?" I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'***

The second is the idea that the Scriptures act as a 'washing agent', for our hearts and our minds, as we daily remind ourselves of the great story of the Gospel by devoting time to reading and exploring God's word. The Scriptures help us to, in a sense, wash daily so we are better able to minister before the Lord, serving as members of the priesthood of all believers. Paul highlights the importance of the Scriptures to guide us in daily life and reflects upon their great ability to lead us in God's ways, impacting how we think and act towards others. A healthy love of the Bible helps us to have a healthy love for others. Paul uses the symbolism of marriage as an example, how the relationship between husband and wife can be even more meaningful and profound when the Scriptures play a central role. He writes to the church in Ephesus, that the love Jesus has for the church is like a process of making her clean through ***'washing with water through the word'*** the result being a ***'radiant and holy'*** church. A husband is called to love his wife likewise and this Scripture-focused, Bible-infused, God's word-centred love is to flow out into all our relationships and reshape the way we live, loving God and our neighbour as its pages prompt and direct us to.

As we hope for the situation we are in to further improve, and restrictions to begin easing, now is the time to 'screw in' habits that will last and endure. No matter how busy or difficult life is, reading the Bible, and having a good rhythm of doing so, is so important as it helps us to find strength, to be rebuked and encouraged, to be reminded of God's promises, and aided in how to live for him in whatever circumstances surround us. God's word has something to say to us always, but the washing powder won't wash the clothes in the box and the Bible won't speak to us closed. Maybe you've not sure how to start good Bible reading habits or how to develop a better understanding of Scripture. There's loads of ways to do it, perhaps join in with our Bible study on a Monday evening, or start reading one of the Gospels, a chapter a day and jotting down anything that's sticks out, maybe something you don't understand or something that speaks to you. There are also lots of great Bible reading plans out there too. As always, if I can be of use in any way with helping you with your Bible reading or you would like to talk about it and share some of your thoughts and questions, just shout, anytime.

***Are you walking daily by the Saviour's side?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Do you rest each moment in the Crucified?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?***

***Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin,
And be washed in the blood of the Lamb;
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,
O be washed in the blood of the Lamb!***

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 7th March would have been:

(Pedestal) The Kirk Session

(Sanctuary) Mrs P Smyth, Culmaglen, Jordanstown

BUILDING FUND UPDATE

In what has been an unprecedented year globally, the Report is positive, reflecting a 1.95% increase in giving by envelope & standing order, and a bumper Harvest Gift Day Appeal of £ 5,454 which included a £900 donation from two former members. The Report extends grateful thanks to members and friends of the congregation for their continuing support, records that the number of standing orders has risen from 25 to 39, year-on-year, and thanks those who took the time to leave envelopes at 'Open Church', or posted to church, or to us at home. Total income of £ 66,629 is a magnificent outcome given restrictions on public worship and fund-raising activities, and the shortfall of £19k on last year's income of £85k is entirely due to the restrictions on fund-raising. There is a short paragraph on expenditure in 2020, and an update on the loan with the Ulster Bank which had a balance of £129,565 at 31 December.

Warmest good wishes

Richard & Elaine Molyneaux- Joint Building Fund Convenors

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:

Rev. Edward McKenzie

07809674068

emckenzie@presbyterianireland.org