

ROSEMARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland – NIC 104448

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Dear Friends,

I hope you are continuing to keep well during this present health crisis.

The Coronavirus has affected all of us in one way or another, what we have known as normal has been changed into something different. What does your new normal look like? Maybe it is similar!

This has been a time of learning for us all as we have had our lives turned upside down. 'Social distancing' has become our normal practice when we meet with others. We have been forced to modify or stop doing things we have taken for granted, travelling, shopping, driving, working and exercising. Apparently the air quality we are living in is much better and the levels of pollution are much lower. What we do now centres in our homes, unless you are working in the NHS or are considered a key worker. Stay home, save the NHS and save lives has consistently been the Government's mantra. On the negative side a BBC Website article (13 April) on the ways coronavirus has changed us indicated that there was more demand for benefits such as Universal Credit as well as a 25% increase in domestic abuse calls to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

As we try to make sense of what is happening, there has been a challenge for us, to think about what is or is not really important in our lives. This has been a time to learn good habits especially thinking about our use of time and looking after our mental health. During this Covid 19 crisis we have appreciated the value of other people and our communication with them through the various means open to us. The phone has been great, along with texting and whatsapp, face time, skype and a new one for me a 'zoom call'. We have had time to speak to family and friends and enjoy their company as we engage in conversation. Learning to schedule time to make those calls is as important for us as it is for the people we speak to. Exercise, in whatever way is possible, is also helpful seemingly stimulating parts of our brain that aren't as responsive when we are feeling down. As well as producing endorphins (feel good chemicals) exercise provides distraction from a constant focus on our situation. It helps improve our physical fitness as well as 'clearing our heads!'

Communication has been important for us as a congregation even though we cannot meet together physically. We are seeing the importance of phone calls, how they can keep us in touch with each other. Please do not hesitate to ring me or any of the elders if there is some way you feel we would be able to help. It is important that we pray for each other too during this time, particularly those who are vulnerable, isolated or are ill in hospital or Care Home with our current visiting restrictions. Pray also for those who are continuing to work in the NHS or are key workers. I want to encourage you to keep using your phone to keep contact with others at this time.

The current crisis also enables us to evaluate our relationship with God as well as providing time and opportunity to see it grow. The key ingredient here is time alone with God and His word as we speak to Him and listen to what He wants to say to us. There are also a host of resources to help us either in book form or on the internet. It is so important to take ourselves away from others and particularly our sources of entertainment such as television to spend time with God, to interact with Him and know Him more intimately.

Paul expresses this desire very well in Philippians 3:10-11 when he says he wants to '*... know him (Christ) and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible*

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I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Paul has already pointed out that he considers everything else worthless compared to getting to know Jesus. This is such an important message for us at this time in our lives.

As soon as Paul has stated this he is very quick to point out that he hasn't attained it yet. He adds, *'I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.'*

Paul is clear about how this is to happen in his life. In moving forward Paul wants to forget the past. All the successes, encouragements, failures and hurts are consigned to the box entitled experience. We give thanks that God is able to teach us from them, but they do not define us. We are not to allow them to hinder or paralyse us, but be an encouragement to go forward with Christ and who knows they may even be useful to others as we seek to encourage them.

Spiritual maturity, Paul says, is to strain forward in seeking to win the prize for which Jesus has called us to Himself. We see the future with hope because we see Jesus. Winning the prize is experiencing the presence of Jesus forever. The coronavirus pandemic causes worry about our future whether it's our economy, our employment or financial status, our health or our loved ones. Paul is encouraging us to focus on how we are living now, taking each day as it comes and thinking about how we can glorify Jesus in how we live.

I trust that the new normal for you, while presenting new challenges is also providing new opportunities to learn about yourself, your family and friends and also about how God is at work in your life in Jesus Christ. My prayer is that you will grow in your relationship with God and that you will know His presence and peace in the days ahead.

Philip McCrea

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Daily Reading Notes

Heather Semple writes, 'UCB Bible Reading Notes will be available from outside the door of 94 Whitehouse Park from Monday 20 April in a large white plastic box.'

Thank you

Thank you to Trevor Long, Carolyn Dawson, Graeme Greenwood, Barbara McIlwrath and Ruth Davies who recorded very helpful Bible Readings and Reflections for Holy Week. These can still be accessed on the Rosemary Facebook page and on the Church Website. I have also recorded video messages which have been posted on our Facebook page and our church website. A new message will be posted on Saturday evening.

A message from the Treasurer

As the restrictions introduced as a result of the Coronavirus continue I have been humbled by the number of members making contributions to Rosemary Presbyterian Church. This is much appreciated and enables us to meet our financial obligations as they become due for payment. I would encourage you all to contribute and would suggest these are made on a month by month basis until our normal weekly service resumes. This can be done by post or on line banking.

For FWO and / or other funds of the church - by cheque payable to Rosemary Presbyterian Church and posted to me at 18 Farm Lodge Road, Greenisland, Carrickfergus, BT38 8XH

For FWO only - by bank transfer to 95.01.21 account name Rosemary Presbyterian Church and account number 61034898. As a reference quote your surname + FWO number. For example Eakin No 123. This will assist greatly in identifying the donor for gift aid purposes.

Resources

There are a number of resources on the PCI website in the 'These Three Remain' section. Tides is a set of daily devotions which provide a section of God's word to read, a short reflection sharing what this could mean for your life and a way for you to respond. The PCI Service, led by the Moderator, is also found on this website.