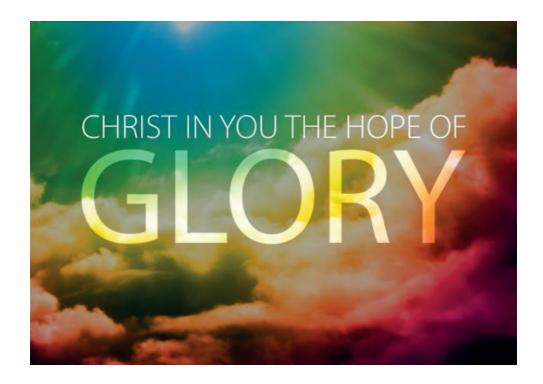


www.railwaystreet.org NI CHARITY NO: 105157

April 2021



Minister: Rev Michael Davidson t: 02892 667010

Deaconess: Heidi England t:
Youth Worker: Steven Woods t:
Student Youth Wkr: Shannen Symth t:

Church Office

Closed to the public at present

Contact: 028 9260 2766

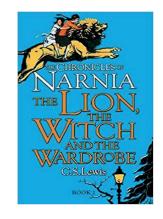
office@railwaystreet.org

FOLLOWING CHRIST SERVING THE COMMUNITY



'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' (1 Peter 1:3)

One of my favourite books as a child was by that famous son of Ulster, C.S. Lewis, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe." It is about four children who enter the land of Narnia through a magic wardrobe. Narnia is a land under the dominion of the White Witch whose power ensures that in Narnia, 'it is always winter but never Christmas.' But as the children arrive in Narnia something is stirring and there is a growing sense of hope among the inhabitants of that land that prophecies will soon be fulfilled and that the great lion Aslan, the son of the great King across the sea, will return to Narnia in order to overthrow the White Witch. The truth of this is seen in the great thaw which then sets in as the ice begins to melt and new life appears.



For all of us this has been a long and hard winter. We feel like we have been living in a land under a similar curse, only in our situation it is always 'lockdown' and never spring. We know that even in the best of times winter can be a mournful time of year, the trees and fields are bare, many of the birds leave for warmer climes and the days grow short. But in addition to all of that we have been living through our second major lockdown which has seen schools and all but essential businesses closed. In addition, in person worship services were once again suspended back in January.

But now we are enjoying the signs of the dawning of spring all around us, the snowdrops, daffodils and crocuses have come, the grass is growing again, the birds are making their nests, and the days are growing longer and warmer. This along with the decrease of Covid cases and the ongoing roll out of the vaccine is causing people to think that we might at last be emerging from the Covid19 Pandemic. It lifts our spirits and gives us hope. But we also know our hopes have been lifted before only to be

disappointed. So, what we really need is a hope that is much more solid and substantial.

The Cambridge Dictionary gives us this definition of the word, 'hope' – 'to want something to happen or to be true, and usually have a good reason to think that it might.'

As Christians we know that our hope is even stronger than this. It is to be sure that something is true and will happen and we have good reason to know that it will.

Hope is an essential characteristic of the Christian life and the Bible is filled with it. In the Old Testament hope is very closely related to the character of God. Those who hope in God trust God and His promises. Because God is the hope of the righteous, they can expect good things from God and wait patiently for His help and deliverance. This patient hope is firmly anchored in the history of God's people as recorded in scripture – The God who has fulfilled His promises to Israel in the past will continue to be faithful in the present and the future. Hope that does not place its trust in God is false hope which God will eventually overthrow.

The New Testament concept of hope is of course rooted in the Old Testament understanding but in the New Testament hope is specifically focused on the person of Jesus Christ and the events of that first Easter. With Easter comes hope. Paul writing to the church in the Greek city of Corinth says this, "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance; that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and that he appeared to Peter and then to the twelve." (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

On Good Friday it looked like death still had the final say, that death remained a power that could not be broken. The broken body of Jesus was laid in a cold tomb, a stone was rolled across the entrance and sealed. But Sunday followed and on that morning the stone was rolled way for Jesus had risen, showing His power and victory over death, showing that death is no longer the final word, far from it. Now there is hope, there is a promise of new life for all those who know and love Jesus Christ. Hence Paul could say triumphantly to the Corinthians, "Death has been swallowed up in victory, Where O death is your victory where O death is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:54-56)

This is the basis of the Christian hope. 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' is at its heart an allegory of the Easter Story retelling the death and resurrection with Aslan representing the figure of Jesus Christ. Our hope rests on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. So, it really is a case of, 'Know Christ, know hope. No Christ no hope.'

We live in a world searching for hope and either struggling to find it or finding it in the wrong place. But we know that, 'With Easter Comes Hope.' There is hope of new beginning through Jesus Christ that is offered to everyone who accepts Him as Lord

and Saviour. As we approach Easter we will again hear the message of Him who has conquered death. We will again hear that invitation to accept and share in His victory.

The great news is that we will be reopening our Meeting House for public worship on **Good Friday 2**nd **April**. I do hope you will join with us either in person or online to celebrate the reality that **'With Easter Comes Hope.'** Full details of our services can be found elsewhere in this bulletin and are available on our website at www.railwaystreet.org

Yours in His service, Michael Davidson

From the Moderator and Clerk of the General Assembly

RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON GATHERINGS FOR WORSHIP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Dear Colleagues,

Exactly one year ago on St Patrick's Day, 17th March 2020, the Clerk of Assembly sent an e-mail to every Minister in PCI indicating that "all Sunday gatherings for worship should cease until further notice". In the months since then, there have been some very challenging days, and this has included long periods when we haven't been able to gather together in person for worship.

Therefore we are pleased to be able to write to you today, again on St Patrick's Day, 17th March 2021, letting you know that all PCI congregations in Northern Ireland can resume in-person gatherings for worship from Friday 2nd April (Good Friday) onwards.

It is with deep regret that we also have to let you know that our colleagues and congregations in the Republic of Ireland are very unlikely to be able to resume in-person gatherings for worship at that time, or indeed in the foreseeable future, even though strong representations continue to be made to the government in that jurisdiction.

Late on Monday afternoon 15th March, both of us as Moderator and Clerk, along with leaders from the other main churches, met with the First Minister and deputy First Minister. In what was a positive meeting, the First Ministers stressed how much they appreciated the strong partnership which had been developed between the churches and the NI Executive. They recognised how important a contribution churches had made by agreeing to voluntarily step back from holding in-person services since early January this year, thereby contributing to the overall reduction of inter-person contact in line with the government's 'stay at home' message. They also acknowledged the genuine sacrifice this had been for many people, given the importance for Christians of gathering for in-person worship.

The First Ministers went on to indicate that they understood the significance of Easter for Christians, and recognised that, in the context of the gradually improving public health situation and the beginning of cautious steps out of lock-down, that churches would be resuming in-person gatherings for worship

in the lead up to Easter. All of the church leaders present welcomed this recognition on behalf of government and indicated that the return to in-person services in the lead up to Easter would be in the context of all necessary mitigations and safeguards being in place, with the safety of everyone involved being of utmost importance.

PCI's General Council Standing Committee then met and received the report of the meeting with the First Ministers. The General Council Standing Committee, acting with the delegated authority of the General Council and General Assembly, therefore agreed that in-person gatherings for services of worship could resume in all PCI congregations in Northern Ireland from Friday 2nd April (Good Friday) onwards.

Many of our members are longing to gather again as a Church family for worship - that is understandable. Many will also be nervous about gathering again — that too is understandable. We need to balance these two realities, remembering that the safety of all who gather must be one of our priorities.

- There should be clear advance communication with members regarding both the health and safety protocols which are in place and also the individual members' responsibilities in following these protocols and all relevant current general public health advice.
- 2 metre social distancing must continue to be maintained, thereby restricting the numbers that can be present in-person.
- It remains legally mandatory that face-coverings are worn on entry and exit and during the entire service, except for those exempted and those leading from the front, when they are engaged in leading.
- If talking to others outside, before or after a service, it is important to maintain social distancing and ideally to continue to wear facecoverings.
- Singing should continue to be governed by the principles of being shorter and less frequent than under normal circumstances.

At this stage it is only in-person gatherings services of worship that can resume from Friday 2nd April onwards. **Other meetings should not take place until the**

further easing of restrictions by the NI Executive and a further notification from the Clerk of Assembly. This means that in-person Kirk Session meetings, organisation meetings and other in-person activities (both indoor or outdoor) should not take place until further notice. The next formal review by the NI Executive is scheduled for 15th April and it is unlikely that there will be any further easing of restrictions announced until then.

Paul reminded the Corinthians, as he reminds us today, that "we live by faith, not by sight". This is true every bit as much as we begin to come out of lockdown as when we were in the midst of these past long and difficult months. Let us therefore continue to commit our ways to the Lord, in faith trusting Him to guide us we cautiously move forward together.

May the Lord bless you, your fellow leaders and your people in these days, as we celebrate together the Easter hope that comes through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus - a hope that is sure and steadfast.

Yours in His Service,

June 1. Gride

Rt Rev Dr David Bruce (Moderator or the General Assembly)

Rev Trevor Gribben (Clerk of the General Assembly)







EASTER SERVICES

Wednesday 31st March at 8:00pm - Hope from Isaiah 25 - Stephen Woods
(Online only)

Thursday 1st April at 8:00pm – Hope from Hosea - Charlie Hadjiev

(Online only)

Good Friday Communion Service 2nd April at 7.30pm 'Hope From the Cross' – Michael Davidson

(In person & online)



Sunday 4th April

10.30am Easter Family Service 'Hope From The Resurrection' – Michael Davidson

(In person & online)

Services for the rest of April

'Confident in Christ' - Studies in Colossians

11th April

10:30am - Colossians 3:18-4:6 - Stephen Johnston

18th April

10:30am - Colossians 4:7-18 - Michael Davidson

25th April

10:30am - Philemon - Michael Davidson

Do please remember if you are planning to attend, to register by the Friday evening at attend.railwaystreet.org

Watch online at www.railwaystreet.org

Telephone Line Service – 028 92448979



Communion On Good Friday 2nd April

Normally in Railway Street there is the opportunity for communion once a month either at a morning or an evening service. It was the last Sunday evening in February 2020 when we were last able to celebrate

the Lord's Supper together – that is now over a year ago.

Does it matter?

Yes we believe it does and here are some reasons:

- This is something that Jesus Himself commanded His disciples to do.
- It seems clear in the New Testament that this was something the church did together frequently, possibly every time they met together.
- It is a visual aid that helps us look back and remember what Christ has done for us on the cross.
- It is also something that is significant for us as disciples in the present

 it is a means of grace. The Reformed church believes that Christ is
 present spiritually with His people and uses this sacrament to
 strengthen and deepen our faith.
- It is also something that causes us to look forward in the confident hope of Jesus' return to this earth to make all things new. As Paul said, "In this way you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

So this should be something that we have missed doing together. It is our usual practice to celebrate communion at our Good Friday service and we are delighted that we will be able to do so on 2nd April.

This, like everything else, will have to be done differently. We cannot have elders distributing the bread and wine nor can we have people passing metal plates and trays to one another. So what we have done is to purchase a supply of individually sealed communion kits. These are around the same size and shape as our normal communion cups. There is an inner and an outer seal. Inside the inner seal there is a small amount of communion wine and then between the inner and outer seal there is a small piece of communion bread. We will place these in the communion cup holders 72 hours before the service



on 2nd April. This will then enable all those present to share in the Lord's Supper together. The minister will preside alone at the table.

We are conscious that there are many communicant members who cannot currently join us and while I believe that communion is something that should normally only happen when the church is met together physically, these are not normal circumstances, and so we will on this occasion also seek to enable those watching or listening at home to share in this communion service if you wish. We would therefore ask that you let your district elder know if you want to share in this way and we will see that one of these sealed cups is delivered to you before Friday 2nd April.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEATHS

It is with sadness we record the deaths of:

Mr David Alexander Caldwell

Mrs Emily Welsh

Mrs Mary Jane (Jean) Hutchinson

Mr Samuel Sydney Black

Dr Brian Robert Huey

4th February 2021

17th February 2021

21st February 2021

3rd March 2021

13th March 2021

We extend our sympathy and prayers to all the families at this difficult time.

The **CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE** will meet by Zoom on **Monday 12th April 2021 at 8pm.**

PRAYER FOCUS will also take place via Zoom on **Monday 19th April** from 8.00-9.00pm.





SONG BOOKS

Would past choir members like to claim their personal song book? The books can be found in the Minor Hall.

Railway Street Pres. Girls' Brigade are feeling thankful in 2021

Christmas gifts were given to the girls at a 'GB Drive Thru' in our Car park just before the December lockdown.

Ten 'officers in the making' have already completed two online elements of the **Leadership course** and all helpers have been trained in GB Child Protection.

GB leaders are thankful for encouragement, support and gifts from the Session and members of the congregation as we set up a new company.

24 girls of all ages have, so far, registered an interest in our company.



Railway Street Pres. GB online sends out a variety of bible stories, crafts, puzzles, recipes, devotions, games and songs online through an app called Seesaw to each section fortnightly. The Seniors have met twice on Zoom.

An Easter 'Drive Thru' is planned for Good Friday between 11.30 am and 1pm when GB and BB will receive Easter gifts.



Register an interest in our company by emailing gb@railwaystreet.org or contact Hilary Milligan or Linda Davidson directly.



CHURCH LINK SUMMARY UPDATE

Anyone who has not been involved closely with the Link Project can be forgiven for thinking that not a lot has been happening. It is hard to believe that our current Church Link development journey began in April 2016 when the development team was initially set up. Their proposal was given congregational approval in November 2018 and Dromore Presbytery approval in December 2018. A gift day was then held on 7 April 2019 and the planning application was submitted in June 2019. Planning approval, with conditions, was given in June 2020.

In September 2020 when phase 1 of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions started to ease we began the process of meeting with our Architects, Engineers and Consultants to develop our plans in more detail and to address the various queries, concerns and some significant problems that arose. The Covid-19 restrictions gave us some challenges and a number of our meetings had to take place using zoom. In order to ensure that we make the best use of our resources, but also consider what the congregation will expect when we open the Link, we put together various small teams of subject matter experts from within the congregation and I am thankful to all who have been helping in any way.

We are now at the stage where the Structural and Architects' drawings are complete and we have put together an approved list of suitable contractors, so we expect that within the next few weeks we will be able to go out to tender.

It is hoped that we will be in a position to have a contractor appointed and be able to start work on site by early summer. To prepare for this some people have been working hard to clear the area, by disposing of items that are no longer required, and relocating equipment that needs to be retained. As we move into the summer we will have to plan to be without the Link and Minor Hall area for possibly 10 to 12 months and also work with a reduced car parking area, as part of it will be required as a builders' compound. Fundraising is progressing well, but it is hoped to allow the congregation a further opportunity to support financially by holding a gift day prior to work beginning.

Ivan Woods



The Following is taken from a PCI Press release issued on 19th March in response to speculation that the government at Westminster was proposing to enact powers to allow the Secretary of State to override any decision by the Northern Ireland Assembly to alter the Abortion Regulations that the Westminster imposed on Northern Ireland while the Assembly was suspended.

'Grave concern' at NIO proposals

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has expressed its 'grave concern' at proposals to allow the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to give direction to Northern Ireland's Department of Health, over the head of the Northern Ireland Executive.

In a statement it said, "The Presbyterian Church in Ireland's General Council Standing Committee, meeting today (19 March), noted with grave concern the proposal of the Secretary for State for Northern Ireland to seek powers to give direction to Northern Ireland's Department of Health.

"To do so at a time when the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive is functioning, represents a serious undermining of the devolved settlement, when there is already significant tension regarding other aspects of the way Northern Ireland is being affected post Brexit.

"The Presbyterian Church in Ireland objected strongly to the Westminster government previously imposing laws on Northern Ireland that removed the protection of the lives of unborn children. This damaging step was taken over the heads of our elected Assembly, with the excuse given that the devolved institutions were not functioning at that time. No such excuse for the undermining of devolution can be used at this time.

The statement concluded by saying, "The Presbyterian Church calls upon the Secretary of State not to take the step he proposes and to let the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly seek to find a consensus way forward, in line with the principle upon which devolution is founded."

Barabbas

Where did Barabbas spend the afternoon of the first Good Friday? At home?
With friends?
Fleeing the country?
Or did he perhaps go to Calvary?

Did he watch as the man who hung there took his place? Was he there among the crowd as the Galilean was crucified instead of him? This one whom everyone knew did not deserve a punishment, but who, at the last moment, had been substituted for him. Was Barabbas there, at Calvary?

And if he was, what did he think?

Could he almost feel the nails which would otherwise have been driven through his hands and feet?

Did he want to fetch the drink which this dying stranger requested?

Could he bear to listen as the cries of anguish reached his ears?

Did he feel guilty that this man was in the hands of the soldiers, while he knew the relief of being set free?

Or did he go to mock?

Did he sneer with contempt at the hapless one who had got into this evil tangle? Did he laugh that another was suffering while he got off scot-free? Was he quite unmoved by the scene of an innocent man being crucified?

Lord, you alone know where Barabbas stood that day.
You know if he ever thanked you for what you did in his place.
You know if he heard you say "It is finished!" and realised it was a voluntary act that took you to the cross.
And you alone know if he joined you one day in paradise.

All we know is that any one of us might have been him that day. Barabbas, the guilty one,
At the foot of the cross,
Watching.

(Based on Luke 23 v 13-25)

SUNDAYS AT RAILWAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 10.30am LIVE STREAM SERVICE

There are no week day activities at present.

Please not change to church office email: office@railwaystreet.org