

May/June 2024

THE bulletin



“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

Romans 1:20

Photo by Suzanne D Williams on Unsplash

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Preachers Are Problems

Dear Friends,

Preachers are problems. Have you ever noticed that? Some of you will quickly agree and say, “We noticed that when you went on until nearly 11:55 a couple of Sundays ago!” Our response to preachers will depend on our own perspective - are we those who want to hear God’s truth or are we those who would rather have preachers tell us what we want to hear.

In Micah 2 we find both true preachers and false preachers are posing problems. The reality is no faithful ministry of God’s Word ever goes unopposed. If people don’t like what they are hearing they reject and criticise the messenger.



Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

Another option is to secure the services of a preacher who will give sermons more to your liking.

In the first part of chapter 2 the prophet Micah has lambasted Jerusalem’s ruling class for their covetousness and greed and their use of corrupt and wicked actions to enrich themselves while impoverishing others. Micah has pronounced God’s judgment upon the guilty. But those Micah is preaching against are not taking this condemnation lying down. Instead they hit back by hiring their own prophets to preach that nothing like what Micah was preaching would happen.

“Do not prophesy,” their prophets say.

“Do not prophesy about these things;
disgrace will not overtake us.”

You descendants of Jacob, should it be said,

“Does the Lord become impatient?

Does he do such things?” (Micah 2: 6-7)

The ruling class in Jerusalem wanted preaching that did not make them feel guilty or uncomfortable. The preachers they paid were seeking to stifle Micah’s preaching of judgment on Judah’s idolatry and sin. They themselves wouldn’t be caught dead preaching such a negative message. This is often the hallmark of false preaching - a denial of God’s judgement on sin. False preachers cannot stand the Bible’s teaching on sin and judgment. False preaching then and now instead emphasises human goodness, health, wealth, and prosperity and pronounces that God is loving and accepting of all.

The false prophets were no doubt reminding the people of a glorious truth - God’s long suffering grace. After all, had not God revealed himself to Moses as “The LORD, The LORD, a God merciful and gracious. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin (Exodus 34:6-7). So how could Micah go around threatening God’s people with judgement? Had not God himself promised mercy, grace and indefinite acceptance? The problem was not so much with the truth that the false prophets taught but what they chose to leave out. In this case they would stop their reading of Exodus 34 before God had finished declaring who He was. As you read on in verse 7 it says, “Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

The living and gracious God is also a holy God of justice who punishes sin. This was the inconvenient truth that Micah preached and that the false preachers then and now seek to ignore.

False preachers then and now manipulate and pervert what God has said in His word. They present a smooth and comfortable theology with everything difficult taken out and their message of convenient half truths is well polished and eloquently delivered in order to appeal to their hearers. False prophets offer cheap grace. What is cheap grace?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer the uncompromising faithful German pastor who died at Hitler's hands said this, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

In verse 11 Micah mixes prophecy with sarcasm as he sketches what it takes to be a popular preacher in Judah. Dale Ralph Davis translates the Hebrew this way, "If a windbag goes around and utters lies, 'I will preach to you of wine and beer!' He shall be the preacher of this people!" Dale Ralph Davis says, "When these windbags preach their positive message their hearers drink it up. They love to hear the covenant promises but not the covenant prescriptions, they like its comforts but not its commandments. They assume that a prophet's function is to tell them what they want to hear, that the barometer is rising, the economy is expanding and God is smiling."

Many people today still seem to want to hear such a message. They say we should have no negativism in our message, no guilt no wrong, no judgement. Dale Ralph Davis says they claim, "We must not make people feel bad about themselves. But then the cross becomes a charade, for when there is no wrath of God that falls upon the Son of God who took my hell as his portion. If you do not hear of your sin, your guilt, your ruin, how can the cross of

Christ become the shelter of Christ from those very curses? But the current preference is to hear of the bland benevolence of a non-existent spineless deity.”

Micah suggests that the most telling indicator of our spiritual condition is revealed by our answer to this question: “What kind of preaching does your heart crave: soft and false or hard and true?” The reality is that those churches especially in PCI who prefer soft and false preaching are rapidly declining. It is those churches who are preaching the hard and true Gospel that are growing. I hope that we all want Railway Street to be a church that continues to grow.

I recently heard that Rico Tice, the well known evangelist and author of *Christianity Explored*, has left the Church of England as he felt he could no longer stay in a denomination that he believes has departed from the faithful preaching of the Gospel and which no longer feels the need to call people to repent of sin.

Where is he now worshipping? In an International Presbyterian Church in Ealing. Asked why he had joined a Presbyterian church he said this “Theologically we are very similar. I like its model of eldership, I see myself as Reformed, I hold the Westminster Confession very dear, and I am a paedobaptist.” He also said, “It is also one of the few growing denominations.”

If you want preaching that is soft and false then the odds are you will not be enjoying our current preaching series in Romans. We had to spend several weeks focusing on the bad news of God’s coming wrath over our sin - the fact that none of us can save ourselves, that we all stand hopeless and condemned before a holy and righteous God - because that is what Paul spends three chapters setting out. Yet having worked through that bad news we are now hearing the Good News of God’s grace poured out on



us through Christ and of how, “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) This is the true Gospel.

What kind of preaching does your heart crave: soft and false

or hard and true? Richard Philips says, “We have heard it said, “You are what you eat.” Far more profound is the truth that you are what you hear. Soft preaching makes hard hearts and hearts hardened by sin will perish under God’s wrath. But hard preaching that teaches what we need to hear, whose teaching that presents both deliverance and judgement, mercy and wrath, forgiveness and repentance, leads to soft hearts that receive salvation from the God of truth and love.”

I want to encourage you to join us as Sunday by Sunday we continue to climb the theological mountain that is Paul’s Letter to the Romans. Yes at times it is hard going but the final destination is well worth the effort and the view from the summit will take your breath away.

Yours in His service,

Michael Davidson

SERVICES FOR MAY

Mornings: Romans - a Letter that Makes Sense of Life

Evenings: Micah - a Prophet for Our Times

5th May

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|---------|---|
| 10:30am | Isaiah 35 'Hope In the Desert of Despair'
Stephen Johnston |
| 6.30pm | Micah 2:12-13 'Waiting for the Breaker'
Michael Davidson |

12th May

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 10:30am | Romans 6:1-14 'Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ'
Michael Davidson |
| 6.30pm | Praise & Prayer - led by Alan Wall |

19th May

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 10:30am | Romans 6:15-23 'Freedom in Service'
Michael Davidson |
| 6.30pm | Micah 3:1-7 'Rush To Ruin' Michael Davidson |

26th May

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 10:30am | COMMUNION Romans 7:1-6 'Freedom from the Law' Michael Davidson |
| 6.30pm | Sunday Evening Praise in the Link |



Watch online at
www.railwaystreet.org



Telephone Line Service
028 9244 8979

SERVICES FOR JUNE

Mornings: Romans - a Letter that Makes Sense of Life

Evenings: Micah - a Prophet For Our Times

2nd June

10:30am Isaiah 43:27-31 'God Renews Our Strength'
Stephen Johnston

6.00pm Exodus Team Commissioning in Sloan Street Presbyterian

9th June

10:30am Youth Sunday

6.30pm 'Issues Facing Christians Today - Understanding Islam'

16th June

10:30am Romans 7:7-25 'Freedom in Christ'
Michael Davidson

6.30pm Service of Licensing for Steven Woods

23rd June

10:30am Romans 8:1-17 'Freedom Through the Spirit'
Michael Davidson

6.30pm Micah 4:1-5 'The Stubborn Future' Michael Davidson

30th June

10:30am Romans 8:18-27 'Freedom for Creation'
Michael Davidson

6.30pm COMMUNION Micah 4:6-13 'The Road to Restoration' Michael Davidson



Watch online at
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Bereavements

It is with sadness that we record the deaths of:

Kenneth (**Ken**) Samuel Kyle, 22nd February 2024

David Henderson, 28th March 2024

John Moorehead Jackson, 25th April 2024

The congregation extends their heartfelt sympathy and prayers to their families at this time of loss.

Births

It is with delight that we announce the births of:

George Archie Francis

12th April 2024



Elsie Jan Marjorie Neill

22nd April 2024



Baptism

Jesse Samuel Woods - 10th March 2024

Marriage

Alison Pollock & David Ballie - 6th April 2024

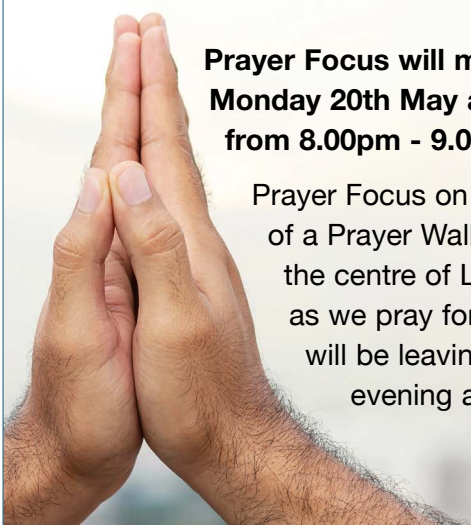
Prayer Focus

“Lord, teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1)

Have you ever asked God to teach you to pray? If so, why not join us for a time of corporate prayer, once a month for one hour. You will discover that some will feel led to pray aloud while others will prefer to pray silently. We believe that God hears all our prayers and will answer in his own time and in his own way.

Our newspapers, radio and TV constantly remind us of so much conflict everywhere. God’s intervention is needed. Let us come together to play a very small part as we ask God to bring his love, peace and stability to our fallen world.

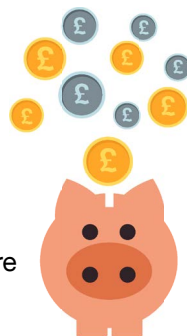
This invitation to come along to Prayer Focus is extended to EVERYONE who knows and loves Jesus Christ.



**Prayer Focus will meet in the Link on
Monday 20th May and Monday 17th June
from 8.00pm - 9.00pm.**

Prayer Focus on 20th May will take the form of a Prayer Walk (weather permitting!) around the centre of Lisburn stopping at key points as we pray for our community and city. We will be leaving the church car park that evening at 8:00pm.

Finance update



You may recall that in my last update, I advised that the accounts showed a deficit of just under £10,000 for 2023. This is a material improvement on the £30,000 deficit we had in 2022 and confirms the tangible progress that we are making to get our main account operating as it should.

Since my report to Committee in February, our main account has seen significant improvement. I am pleased to share that FWO in the first quarter of the year is up by £5,000 compared to the same period last year. When taken with the reduction in our costs as a result of maintaining close control, and with falling inflation, we are now anticipating that this account will have at least a small operational surplus this year. In other words, we expect that we will living within our means this year. We are very grateful to the congregation for your response since details of our financial situation were shared a year ago and ask that you continue to give generously so that our main account continues to run without deficit.

That is only part of the story. Alongside living within our means, you may remember that our main account was effectively overdrawn by £20,000 at the end of December 2023 and the second part of the action we need to take is to clear this position as quickly as we can. I am delighted to be able to advise that over the last 3 months we have received several significant “one-off” amounts totalling around £47,000 which has not only cleared this overdrawn position but returned this account to healthy credit balance. These amounts have primarily come from bequests and we are grateful for those who chose to remember the work of our church in this way. Most of all we give thanks to our Almighty God for answering our prayers for our finances.

I am pleased to share that our United Appeal giving is on track to meet our Target of Honour of £12,345 for 2024. We were reminded on PW Sunday of the work of the International Meeting Point, one of the many projects PCI uses the United Appeal to support financially, and we want

to make sure that our congregation continues our tradition of exceeding our annual United Appeal target.

We continue to wait for the final retention invoice from our contractor for the Link Development. Once this has been received we will know the final cost of the project and be able to begin to consider how we can make additional capital payments to reduce the outstanding balance on our bank loan. This balance currently stands at £598,000 with monthly payments made of £6,500. We receive monthly gifts totalling £2,500 to meet these payments.

In order to meet our monthly loan payments we need to raise an additional £48,000 per year and to ensure we do this our Committee agreed that we would hold two “Gift Days” each year, one in May and one in November. Our next “Gift Day” will be on 19th May and we ask that for your continued generous support in repaying our bank loan.

You can give to the Link “Gift Day” using the special envelopes that will be available. Please make any cheques payable to “Railway Street Presbyterian Church” and, if you are a tax payer, remember to include your name, address and FWO number so that the church can claim Gift Aid of 25% on your gift.

You can also give to the “Gift Day” by bank transfer to the following account.

Account Name: Railway Street Presbyterian Church

Sorting Code: 950361 Account Number: 61042858

Reference: Please use your FWO number

(if you don't know this use your name)

Many thanks, in advance, for your generosity as we continue on our journey to make our church debt free.

Finally, my thanks to John McCleary and all the individuals who work in the background on a weekly basis to ensure all our monies “in and out” are properly dealt with, as well as to my predecessor for his on-going patience dealing with my regular queries.

Gordon Wallace, RSPC Treasurer

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ALL WELCOME

May 23rd - “Brownlee School Choir”

All welcome to come along at 2.30pm sharp in the Minor Hall to be entertained by our local school pupils

June 27th - “Summer Special!”

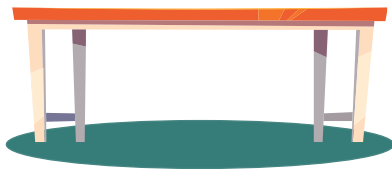
All welcome to end our 2023/2024 session with an afternoon of music and refreshments - 2.30pm in the Minor Hall



Missing Tables

We have noticed that two of our tables have gone missing. If you have borrowed these could you please return them to the Main Hall store as soon as possible.

Thank you.



Taking Care Training

Leaders in all Youth Organisations please note that Taking Care training has been arranged for **Tuesday, 4th June at Railway Street at 7.30pm**. All leaders are required to attend Training every 3 years in compliance with PCI Safeguarding policy.



PW Annual Conference

“Entrusted” Guest speaker Dr Amy Orr-Ewing

Saturday 11th May 2024 in Assembly Buildings Belfast

Morning Session at 10.30am

Afternoon Celebration at 2.00pm

We will be meeting at Lisburn Train Station at 9.20am to travel together and hope to have lunch locally. All ladies welcome to come along.

All ladies of the congregation are invited to

Afternoon Tea - with a difference

supplied by “Farm House Treats”

Saturday 1st June at 2.30pm for 3pm
in the Minor Hall and the Link

Price £16

Pre booking is essential with any member
of PW Committee by Sunday 19th May

Come along and bring/treat a friend

Christian Aid Appeal Week

12th - 18th May 2024



As usual our congregation, like many other churches, will be continuing to support this annual and most worthy appeal through financial donations from our members. To this end special Christian Aid envelopes will be available for you to pick up from the table in the vestibule and in the link from Sunday 5th May.

They can then be returned, along with your contribution inside, by placing them on the offering plate or in the vestibule on subsequent Sundays. Alternatively, they can be given or sent to Edith McConnell or Gordon Wallace. Note also that if you wish to have your contribution gift-aided you need to complete the details requested on the form which is included as part of the envelope.

Elders please note: If you know of any members in your district who are currently not attending church but who may wish to contribute to this appeal, you should take as many envelopes as you may require and deliver one to each of those persons.

With thanks in anticipation,
Roger (Agent for Christian Aid)

'Simply the Story'

Thursday 30 May
10.45am - 12 noon
in The Link



Come along to explore together a well-known Bible story through visual presentation and group discussion.

All welcome



Captain's Report

Programme

Our GB programme covered the four main elements - Spiritual, Physical, Education & Service. The girls' badges and awards reflect achievement in these areas. All girls participated in games & sports, crafts, music and skills. Each section followed a Scripture programme based on God's Promises, where they learned about Bible stories, the life of Jesus and about the practical application of these teachings in their daily lives.

Outings & Events

Tiny Tots and Explorers visited High Rise and Juniors, Seniors & Brigaders worked in squads to undertake challenges including the up-cycling of wooden furniture under the expertise of Adam Baird who assisted with technical advice, specialist tools and training. The auctioned furniture, along with profits from the GB Christmas Market stall, raised £200 for Habitat. We appreciate all the support which our families gave to the annual GB/BB Christmas Market and to the team who helped with the morning coffees and lunches. Our GB families were also so generous in supporting Habitat's Christmas Toy Appeal and in providing items for the Lisburn Foodbank at Harvest. Thank you!

After Easter, Tiny Tots & Explorers will enjoy a visit from Blackberry Farm. Our company sections will enjoy a drumming session and a return visit from Shirley Brown who taught us how to work with acrylic paints and produce some masterpieces.

Church Services

Our annual Enrolment Service took place in October, Ella and Ava assisted with the laying of one of the poppy wreaths at the Royal British Legion Remembrance Day Service and our Company girls sang O Holy Night at our Church Carol Service.

GB Week

Thank you for your support with our recent GB Week fundraising. This year again, more than £1000 was raised, which enhances our weekly programme and covers GBNI fees.

Leaders

Thank you to our dedicated leaders who attend weekly and who work together to prepare a relevant and interesting programme for their sections. They faithfully prepare scripture content to share God's Word with the girls.

Thank you

Our sincerest appreciation goes to Joe and Adeline McKibben for preparing our halls weekly, to Alan Wall for all his audio-visual support for our display and for GB events, to the coffee bar team who provide welcome hospitality each Thursday and to my team of helpers to have come along to welcome and help in the background tonight.

Hilary Milligan, Captain (Report from GB Display)

BB NEWS

ANCHOR BOYS

We've had great fun this year in Anchor Boys with our returning boys along with some new faces too!

Our weekly programme always includes plenty of running around and games as well as some different activities such as baking, arts and crafts, and outings.

Our purpose in BB is to advance Christ's Kingdom and in Anchor Boys this year our theme was "Bible Heroes" transitioning to the life, works, death and resurrection of the ultimate hero - Jesus.

Each week we looked at a Bible passage that showed us how some important characters from the Bible were heroes in their own way and how their stories pointed to the strength and love that God has for his people both then and now.

We saw that Jesus is the ultimate hero and King and learned more about his life and the great sacrifice he made for us.

This evening, we hope you enjoy a taster of what we get up to on Tuesday nights!



JUNIOR SECTION

It's been another busy year in the Junior Section with over 30 boys enrolled.

In addition to the regular weekly events like squads, devotions and O'Grady, the boys have enthusiastically participated in a wide range of other activities.

These have included sports such as football, uni-hoc and table tennis as well as non- sport challenges such as building marshmallow and spaghetti towers, building catapults from lollipop sticks and elastic bands, learning sign language and about other Boys Brigade companies from around the world.

The boys always enjoy activities where food is involved such as making Christmas snowmen, Rice Krispie buns and pancakes.

A number of boys were also involved in Saturday afternoon football where they have competed against other Companies from within the Belfast Battalion at Belvoir Playing Fields in Belfast.

We also competed in the Belfast Battalion Junior Section quiz for the first time and finished in a very credible 4th spot.

All in all we have had a busy year and the boys have made great friendships and have had lots of fun as well!

COMPANY SECTION

We have enjoyed another great year with the boys and leaders at Company Section. Each leader has taken charge of the weekly programme which has given us some great variety. We've enjoyed some trips out to the pool halls, boxing club, driving range, 3G pitches and even took in a Northern Ireland international football match.

Company Section provides a great opportunity for boys of ages 11-18 to come along, mix with other lads from different schools and take part in all sorts of challenges. Our boys enjoy different sports and devotions at the end of the night.

We have had a great year of success within the Belfast Battalion competitions and also the National Competitions. The Badminton team of Ross, Luke, Callum, Eoghan and Aaron won the Northern Ireland trophy and enjoyed competing in the Nationals Finals at Queen's PEC. The Mastermind team of Nathaniel, Isaac, Caleb and Jonathan came 2nd in the Northern Ireland finals and also 2nd in the overall National Finals in Hemel Hempstead. These are both incredible achievements.

Also congrats to the boys gaining their President's Badges and to Isaac for attaining his Queen's Badge. These are very special awards to receive.

Well done to all our boys for their great attitude and behaviour throughout the year.



CAPTAIN'S REPORT

It's a privilege to serve as Captain of 1st Lisburn BB. We have an amazing group of boys and young men who come along each week and enjoy building friendships and learning new skills and competing in games.

We are very grateful to Michael Davidson in his role as Chaplain and to everyone at Railway Street for allowing us to run BB each week. Thanks to all our volunteers and those who prayerfully and financially support us to enable us to do all we do.

We have a great collective of committed, energetic and enthusiastic leaders who served faithfully each week and I am so grateful for each of them.

The diversity of boys and leaders are brought together by our Object and we continue in our efforts to "Advance Christ's Kingdom among boys". Thanks for your continued support.



What's happening?

SUNDAYS AT RAILWAY STREET

MORNING SERVICE 10.30am (live streamed)

BEGINNERS - No. 31

KIDS - Upper Room

JUNIOR YOUTH - Minor Hall

EVENING SERVICE 6.30pm

SENIOR YOUTH - Upper Room

BOYS' BRIGADE (Sept to April)

Monday - Company Section 7.30pm-9pm

Tuesday - Anchor Boy Section 6.30pm-7.30pm &
Junior Section 7pm-8.15pm

GIRLS' BRIGADE (Sept to April)

Thursdays: Tiny Tots & Explorers - 6pm-7pm

Juniors, Seniors & Brigaders - 7.30pm-9pm

PRAYER FOCUS

3rd Monday of each month 8pm-9pm in the Link

BIBLE DISCOVERY (Sept - April)

1st & 3rd Thursday each month at 10.45am - Minor Hall

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS (Sept - June)

Tues & Wed bi-monthly 8pm-9.30pm in various homes

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN (Sept - June)

4th Monday of each month at 8pm - Minor Hall

422 (Sept - June)

4th Thursday of each month at 2.30pm - Minor Hall

THE LINK UP

Every Wednesday 10am - 12noon in the Link