

The Journey



Until you've walked the road that I've trod
and pushed your foot in my shoes,
and felt how worn out they are because of the distance I've travelled,
you can never tell me you know how I feel.
I cry every night because I'm human,
and tears are a language God understands.
I laugh every day
without one knowing what's really going on in my head.
I smile every morning because I have life.
I go through every week hoping that things will get better.
I count the months of disappointments,
because I know the years of victory will be sweet.
God never gives us more than we can bear,
and I'm going to continue walking,
no matter how hot the sun is,
no matter how dusty the day gets,
how cold the night is,
and how lonely I feel.
I will always be grateful.
Where there is life, there is hope.
I believe in the plan God has for my life,
and I may fall short, but he never lets me go.
Thank you, Father, for your grace and mercy
that have brought me through.
I'm living this moment because of you
Nickeisha Samuels

BALLYWALTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



"An active presence for Jesus"

EDITION 199

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Friends,

As we reflect on the final quarter of last year you would be forgiven for taking a deep breath. It was certainly a busy time in the life of our church: We hosted the British Legion and the Lord Lieutenant on Remembrance Sunday. We then worked hard to accommodate Ballywalter Historical Society 's Festival of Remembrance.

We welcomed Dr Russell and his family back with a special lunch before we threw ourselves straight into the preparations for the "The Gift", A journey to Bethlehem and our other different special Christmas services and events.

These were things that unquestionably involved much hard work from many individuals and your efforts have been much appreciated by a great number of people within our Church and from the surrounding area. But it wasn't all slog and drudgery. In the midst of it we knew the joy of service, we got to know people better, our fellowship deepened, we saw God at work in our own lives and in the lives of others. These busy times give us insight into what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 3 when he wrote that we are co-workers in God's service. We are reminded that the church is corporate and that we are body of people united in Christ.

I once heard someone say that the Christian life is not just "Jesus and me" and that is true, however, at its centre, neither can it be less than this. While our unity as a body is crucial and while our time spent together in fellowship is important, we cannot neglect to spend time alone with God.

We read in Luke 5 that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to be with his Father. In Psalm 63, the psalmist tells us that time alone with God, meditating on Him in the watches of the night, is as satisfying as a rich and fattening feast.

So as we move into the New Year, let us set aside some time to spend alone with God. Let us dedicate special moments to seek God's presence and to study His Word in a private and personal way because it is in him that we will find true sustenance, refreshment and delight.

Psalm 84:2. My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Rev. Simpson



Lifting the Collection

We used to have a rota for lifting the collection. Members of the church would be on duty for a month at a time and if for whatever reason they were absent for a service, they would obtain a substitute to act on their behalf. The system, they thought was simple and fool proof. But we showed them!! We had people just like you and me who forgot we were on duty, who didn't realise how many Sundays were in the month(?), who didn't know they were on duty or who simply forgot to arrange a substitute. Those of us who tried to arrange the rota, heard and tried to sympathise with many varied and some genuine excuses.

If you were on Reception Duty implicit in that was to check the collectors were in place if not we had to arrange a last minute substitute since chances were the absentee collector had forgotten. At two minutes to eleven we would ask someone to do duty and at one minute to eleven the missing collector would turn up result shambles! So sometimes there were too many collectors clambering to their feet and sometimes not enough

So the system now in place is that there is no rota and those on Reception Duty arrange the collectors each Sunday. This is still less than perfect but it works. The Session and Committee would be conscious that there may be some people who would be happy to collect but haven't been asked. If you fall into that category please speak to any of the elders who will be delighted to add your name to the list of volunteers.

Collecting is one of the many tasks which occur on a regular basis in our church there are others, and there will be some which will suit you and you may be uniquely suited to one of these tasks. No special talents? If you feel there is a job you think you could do please let us know. We aim to have many people, each doing a little rather than a few people seeming to do too much. There is a job for everyone so give us the benefit of your talents.

Alan Boyd



P.W. has enjoyed an interesting and varied programme over recent months with guests speaking on a wide range of topics, such as "The Art

of Bee-keeping" with Valentine Hodges – "The history of Tea" with Mr. Robert Bell from S.D.Bell & Co Belfast, and a talk given by Helen McCann on her comprehensive collection of beautiful powder compacts.

The P.W. Christmas Fayre was held at the end of November and the remarkable amount of £2,058.00 was raised for P.W. causes both at home and overseas. Very many thanks for your generous support.

In early December a large group of P.W. and church members enjoyed an evening of Christmas Praise at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast.

At the first meeting of the new year we were delighted to welcome Sian Doherty from our own congregation, who gave an excellent talk on her visit to Romania with the Exodus team.

Wishing you all a peaceful and happy new year.

Gwen Brown

Think about this one!

An Ulster Scot devotee walks into a bakers, looks at an array of cakes on offer and barks with a thick accent, "Scuse me, but is that a macaroon, or a meringue?"

"No you're right," said the assistant, "It's a macaroon,"

TAKE HOLD OF EVERY MOMENT

A friend of mine opened his wife's underwear drawer and picked up a silk paper wrapped package.

"This," he said, "isn't any ordinary package." He unwrapped the box and stared at both the silk paper and the box.

"She bought this the first time we went to New York, eight or nine years ago. She has never worn it. Was saving it for a special occasion. Well I suppose this is it." He placed the gift box next to the other clothing he was taking to the funeral parlour. His wife had just died. He turned to me and said.

"Never save anything for a special occasion. Every day in your life is a special occasion."

I think those words changed my life.

Now I read more and work less.

I sit on the porch without worrying about anything.

I spend more time with my family and less at work.

I understand that life should be a source of experience to be lived up to not survived through. I no longer keep anything for "good." I use crystal glasses every day. I'll wear new clothes to go to the supermarket if I feel like it.

I don't save my special scents for special occasions. I use them whenever I want to. The words "Someday..." and "One day..." are fading from my dictionary. If it's worth seeing, hearing or doing, I want to see, hear or do it now. I don't know what my friend's wife would have done if she had known she wouldn't be there the next morning, this nobody can tell.

I think she might have called her relatives and closest friends. She might call old friends to make peace over past quarrels. I'd like to think she would go out for a Chinese, her favourite food. It's these small things that I would regret not doing, if I knew my time had come.

I would regret it because I would no longer see the friends I love. I would regret and feel sad because I didn't say to my brother and wife and sons and friends not enough times at least, how much I love them.

Now I try not to delay, postpone or keep anything that could bring laughter and joy into our lives.

Each morning I say to myself that this could be a special day.

Each day, each hour, each minute is special.

There is a joy for those who believe in the life to come but in this life there is a sadness for what we leave behind.



Mission Information

By

Shirley Burns

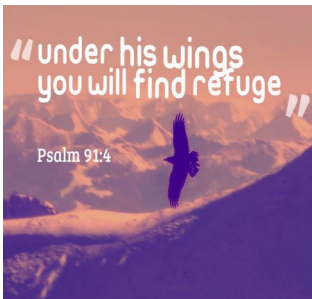
Christian Aid Week is a community event, part of which is a door to door collection made by many volunteer collectors in our area and it is organised by David Wilson. There is also a Christian Aid Lunch in our church hall. The soup, bread and cheese is supplied by members of our congregation and is always well supported.



Childrens' Special Service Missions (CSSM) is part of Scripture Union and a team of up to thirty young people aged seventeen years old and upwards come to share their faith with local children for a week in July. The team stay and are catered for in our church hall. Many people in our congregation make this possible with lots of meals and money donations, This year Ballywalter CSSM will operate from 9th—15th July. Please pray for the team and encourage young people from our community to become involved.



Beneath His Wings is a new mission we have supported this year. It has been set up to provide a safe place where young people aged 18—25 who are caught up in the criminal justice system feel they have somewhere to call home and in which they feel cared for and loved. This house which is local received a third of the gifts given over the Gift Event weekend.



All these missions are over and above what is paid to mission from GB, PW, Community Bible Study, Coffee & Chat and the givings to the United Appeal, World Development Funds and any special collections during the year. Please pray that God's hand is in all these projects and think about how you could become involved.

When Peace Like A River

Mission Praise Number 757

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*



With this hymn comes one of the most heartrending stories in the annals of hymn writing. The author, Horatio G. Spafford (1828-1888), was a Presbyterian layman from Chicago. He had established a very successful legal practice as a young businessman and was also a devout Christian. Among his close friends were several evangelists including the famous Dwight L. Moody, also from Chicago. Spafford's fortune evaporated in the wake of the great Chicago Fire of 1871. Having invested heavily in real estate along Lake Michigan's shoreline, he lost everything overnight. In a saga reminiscent of Job, his son died a short time before his financial disaster. But the worst was yet to come.

Hymn writer Kenneth Osbeck tells the story: "Desiring a rest for his wife and four daughters as well as wishing to join and assist Moody and [his musician Ira] Sankey in one of their campaigns in Great Britain, Spafford planned a European trip for his family in 1873. In November of that year, due to unexpected last-minute business developments, he had to remain in Chicago, but sent his wife and four daughters on ahead as scheduled on the S.S. Ville du Havre. He expected to follow in a few days.

"On November 22 the ship was struck by the Lochearn, an English vessel, and sank in twelve minutes. Several days later the survivors were finally landed at Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, 'Saved alone.'" Spafford left immediately to join his wife. This hymn is said to have been penned as he approached the area of the ocean thought to be where the ship carrying his daughters had sunk.

Another daughter, Bertha, was born in 1878 as well as a son, Horatio, in 1880, though he later died of scarlet fever. After the birth of daughter Grace in 1881, Spafford and his wife moved to Jerusalem out of a deep interest in the Holy Land. There they established the American Colony, a Christian utopian society engaged in philanthropic activities among Jews, Muslims and Christians. After decades of benevolent activities, the Colony ceased to be a communal society in the 1950s, though it continued in a second life as the American Colony Hotel, the first home of the talks between Palestine and Israel that eventually led to the 1983 Oslo Peace Accords. "

This is one of the beautiful old hymns which we no longer sing. It is not listed in the Presbyterian Hymnbook but Sam Booth has promised to play it as a voluntary when the Offering is being collected.

Alan



Girls' Brigade News

The GB has already completed half of the 2016-2017 session, which has been a very busy time as we follow our aim which is to encourage the girls to believe that God knows and loves them all as individuals. In early October the girls in Primaries 3 & 4 attended the Explorer Fun Day at Greenwell Street Presbyterian where the District had organised crafts, games, snacks etc. The speaker was our own Rev. G. Simpson

who was greeted by around 200 girls in many different costumes relating to circus. Gareth encouraged the girls to seek God's direction for their lives. The event closed with praise and prayer.

The older girls have been following the GB scripture course which this year is based on the gospel of John. They have also had two young visiting speakers. Sian Doherty spoke to the girls about her experience with Exodus leading a group of volunteers in Romania. Sian encouraged the girls to think how they could serve others and grow in faith. Natalie Fulton also visited and told the girls about her recent trip to a Ukrainian orphanage, giving our girls a real insight into how blessed they are to access health care and education and encouraging them not to take their home lives for granted. Natalie will again be joining Joymount Carrickfergus GB on their return trip to Uganda with the Fields of Life Project for girls. The special collection of £270.40 collected at the Enrolment Service has been sent to team leader Fiona Clements for use at the girls' school on the banks of the Nile which the team is visiting again this summer. Please pray for the mission work of Exodus and Fields of Life and particularly for young people like Sian and Natalie who are willing to travel to do God's work.

The company was as usual at the Remembrance Parade on Sunday 13th November when a wreath was laid by Officer Carol McAvooy whose late mother was a member of the Royal British Legion. GB girls were the only flag-bearers this year and it was very pleasing to have girls volunteering to perform this service. On Sunday 20th November the Annual Enrolment Service was a family service at which the girls did the readings, led the prayers, lifted the collection and also sang. There were many families present and it was great to see some of them arrived early to enjoy breakfast in the hall along with other members of the congregation. Thanks are due to all those who contributed to breakfast and also the special collection.

The Explorers had a Christmas outing to Santa's Grotto at McGrattan's Farm on Thursday 15th December. Those who were available to attend enjoyed crafts in the barn and met Santa in his special cottage, where he chatted to each girl and gave them a small gift. A donation of £100 was given to Nuala McGrattan for the cancer charity which they were supporting. The older girls have not yet had their outing, but Ganaway Activity Centre has been booked for Monday 30th January from 7-9pm. This will allow us time to complete badge work, other activities etc., and gives us something to anticipate.

Please continue to pray for the girls of the GB and their leaders as we prepare for our display in early April and maintain our efforts to encourage girls of all ages to love the Lord and believe in His care for them.

"The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a Command to be obeyed."
Hudson Taylor

DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY MISSIONS ARE BEING SUPPORTED VIA OUR CONGREGATION AND WHOM TO CONTACT?

LEPROSY MISSION working to defeat leprosy and transform lives. Donations can be made throughout the year. Containers of small change or envelopes—all donations clearly labelled will be very welcome to Anne Wilson. Also used stamps for this mission work are collected by Margaret Irwin. There is a box for the stamps in the vestibule.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHILDRENS' SOCIETY for families in need with church connections. A collection is made via the special envelopes which will be left in the church seats for a two week period once a year. Karen Beacom is in charge.

PENNY FUND. Many people throughout the congregation give to this cause as do the children in Sunday School. The funds are used for child sponsorship in India and for other child related mission work through the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Iris Kildea counts the many pennies.

FOODBANK items are left in the vestibule and are taken to Thriving Life Centre in Newtownards on a regular basis by Caroline Finnegan. This year the gifts from the Christmas Tree Service and two thirds of items given at the Gift Weekend were also sent. This allowed families with children or children without families to receive an extra present. Between December 2011 and February 2016 over 7000 local people in the Ards area have been helped by this worthwhile ministry.

Alongside the work of Foodbank there is the **CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY (CAP)** work, which helps people free themselves from debt and learn to live within their means. This advice is given with loving Christian values and understanding. Details can be found on the church notice boards.

KNIT 'N NATTERS meets in the Blue Room once a month. The items these ladies make are sent to many different places, babies in Africa receive vests, fishermen receive hats and of course many scarfs and hats are made for the shoe boxes. Blanket squares are also made. If you like to knit but cannot attend the meetings, please speak to Margaret Irwin about how you could become involved.

SHOEBOXES for the **SAMARITANS PURSE APPEAL** are available during October and November in the vestibule along with lists of items you can purchase. You can also give money donations for transport costs or needed items. Anne Booth will be happy to talk to you

We are now collecting new and used postcards for **M. A. F.**

These are sold by the Mission to raise much needed funds to help provide isolated and forgotten communities with practical help, spiritual hope and physical healing.

Instead of dropping them into your blue bin, a colourful box is on the table in the vestibule for your contribution. Thank You!

Margaret Irwin

Shirley Burns

Contribution from our Clerk of Session

Christmas and New Year have come and gone for another year and most of us will look back to them with that customary mix of ups and downs that reflect our experiences of life generally - and yet there seems to be a particular edge to them at the festive season.

Many families and family circles connected with our congregation have known problems and difficulties in recent weeks. Bereavement and anniversaries of the loss of a loved one, accidents and illness, employment concerns and the breakdown of relationships have all created situations we would rather not have had to face. On the other hand, the pleasure and wonderment we see in our children and grandchildren as they unwrap their gifts, the joy of new birth and opportunities to spend quality time with loved ones who we may not have seen for some time have been positive experiences.

As a church family we look back over the past couple of months with gratitude to God for the ways He has blessed us. 'Ballywalter Remembers' proved to be a very thought-provoking and successful event. Our special services in December (the anniversary of Gareth's installation which enabled us to welcome Dr Russell back to our pulpit; the family service, carol service and Christmas morning service) were all well received. Our thanks are due to all who were involved in any aspect of these services.

The highlight of the congregation's Christmas season was 'The Gift' and the plaudits it received are well-deserved acknowledgements of the creative skill and talents displayed by the very many people who worked together to create the very professional production that resulted. May I add my personal congratulations and thanks to all who contributed in any way.

It always seems a little strange to me that other than in the weeks preceding Christmas Day, the account of that first Christmas is rarely spoken about in our churches. Yet, without the story portrayed in 'The Gift' there would be no Easter story, which is central to our Christian faith. It also disappoints me that the Christmas festivities, which constitute the biggest birthday party in the world, are so often held without the One whose birthday we celebrate, being given any thought or mention. So, the message of 'The Gift' has special significance for all of us. If I may borrow that well-known slogan created by the Dogs' Trust a few years ago and re-word it slightly:

'The Gift' is for life, not just for Christmas'.

Indeed, as Romans ch 6 v 23 reminds us, 'The gift of God is *Eternal Life*'.

Robert Kildea

Young Women's Group

The newly formed Young Women's group meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month in the Blue Room. In November, we were treated to a cookery demonstration by Suzanne Patton which gave everyone some ideas for Christmas entertaining. In December Fiona McNamara was invited along to demonstrate the art of creating Christmas wreaths. This proved very popular as we set our green fingers to work on our own wreaths. Most recently in January Shannon Clegg put us through our paces with Keep Fit circuit training. If you haven't come along yet, and are curious about what we get up to, please join us. Here's what we have in store:

21st February Craft night

21st March Pamper evening (guest Mrs Lorna Angus)

18th April Spring Planters

16th May Beach walk

20th June Roving Supper



Elizabeth Coulter



The Beginners and Primary Classes had a wonderful time at their Christmas Party in early December. They were thoroughly entertained (and exhausted) for an entire hour by Jump Jiggle and Jive! It was an hour filled with energy and imagination, in which the children "flew" to the North Pole with special magic wands, travelled around the room wearing shiny cloaks, threw "snowballs" and wore Rudolf noses! They even had the chance to "decorate" Kathryn and Rosemary as human Christmas trees! This was followed by some much needed light refreshments. To finish the party everyone sang Jingle Bells as loudly as they could in the hope that a special visitor might appear. It must have worked because Santa arrived with a gift for each of the children.

The Sunday School Christmas service took place on 18th December and despite a few technical hitches it was a lovely opportunity to share the story of Christmas with the church family. The Beginners set the scene by dressing up as the Nativity characters as the congregation sang Away in a Manger, and Eliza, Harry, Heidi, and Jake lit the advent candles. Our readers, Ryan, Natalie, and James shared God's word with us, and we were led in prayer by Mark and James. The piano solo by Lauren, the Sunday School choir (complete with percussion band) singing "This Christmas Time" and the poem "Kings Came Riding" read by Oliver, Adam, and Andrew, all added to the atmosphere of celebration and worship.

Kathryn Chesney

The Gift : A Bethlehem Journey

A transformation took place in the church on Saturday 17th December. We hosted about 300 members of the congregation and local community for 'The Gift: A Bethlehem Journey' where we took an interactive walk through the first Christmas. Along the way we met soldiers, Mary & Joseph, shepherds, wise men, King Herod and the innkeepers to hear about the incredible events of that pivotal day.

Afterwards, guests were treated to a real life stable where they could meet sheep, calves, pygmy goats, a donkey and a pony to get an understanding of what it must have been like at Jesus' birth.

All before warming up in the hall with mince pies, crafts, games and a visit to see Santa in the winter wonderland.

The Gift served as a timely reminder of the true meaning of Christmas and the most precious gift of Jesus our Saviour. We were blessed to see how teams pulled together to make it all happen - bringing their own gifts. What a talented congregation we have! Whether in the set design, costume design, creating a winter wonderland, acting, crafting, donating materials or catering - each played a valuable role in helping us be an active presence for Jesus at such a special time in the Christian calendar.

We do hope to continue being visible in the village and look forward to hosting future events and activities with the main aim being to bless those in the surrounding area with the truth about the Messiah.

A big thank you to everyone involved, it really was a great team effort.

Claire Stewart



Community Bible Study

We continue to meet on Tuesday evenings from 7.30–9.00. We enjoy a cup of tea, pray for others, study God's word and as a group provide support for each other. At present we are joining in a lively debate using a study on the Acts of the Apostles.

We will be holding our first meeting since the Christmas break on Tuesday 17th January in the Blue Room at the rear of the Presbyterian Church and will as usual alternate with hosting the meeting with the Church of Ireland members.

We are evenly divided between males and females and would welcome new members to join us, no matter where you worship on a Sunday. This long established group has seen many changes in personnel over the years but has always been a good place to grow in faith. Please come, a warm welcome is assured.

Shirley Burns

BOWLING CLUB NOTES:

The club has now entered the second half of the indoor bowling season and all members have been having an enjoyable time. We meet on Tuesday and Saturday every week at 7.30pm and new members would be made most welcome.

Jack Moore
Club Secretary.



THE FINAL WORD ON NUTRITION

After an exhaustive review of the research literature, here is the final word on nutrition and health

1. Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than us.
2. Mexicans eat a lot of fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than us.
3. Chinese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than us
4. Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than us
5. Germans drink beer and eat lots of sausages and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than us

Conclusion;

Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you.