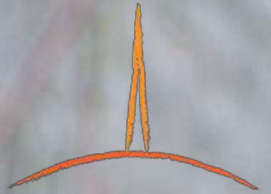


# Wellington Record



March 2017



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## TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE!

Andrea Currie

Triathlon is one of world's toughest sports. Swim 1.5km, ride a bike 40km and finish with a 10km run. Yet brothers Alistair and Jonny Brownlee make it look easy. As they won the gold and silver medals in the 2016 Olympic games in Rio, they collapsed over the line gripping hands to congratulate each other.

Jonny was winning the final race in the World series in Cozumel, Mexico last September, when, 700m from becoming World Champion, it all went wrong. The 35 degree heat began to take its toll and the athlete's legs began to buckle beneath him. Jonny ground to a halt, slumping into a barrier. Yet this was not to be the end of the story. Following close behind, Alistair came to the aid of his brother, grabbing his arm, propping him up and together they started running. Forgetting his own medal priorities, Alistair finally pushed his brother over the finish line into second place. Such a display of brotherly love, rarely seen on the elite sporting world stage.

Recently, we too have been focusing on church family. When all goes well Jesus asks us to 'celebrate' with each other, share in each other's joy and give thanks for the blessings we receive. Yet when things go wrong, when all seems lost, we are commanded, as a church family, to draw close to one another, we are urged to hold each other up and support each other both practically and prayerfully. Like the Brownlees brothers, we are to draw alongside each other until we cross the finish line.

**"Two are better than one ... if one falls down, his friend can help him up ... A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."** Ecclesiastes 4

## Church website

[www.wellingtonpc.co.uk](http://www.wellingtonpc.co.uk)



Get the message on-line at  
[www.wellingtonpc.co.uk](http://www.wellingtonpc.co.uk)  
 iTunes podcast - search for  
 'Wellington Presbyterian Church'

## Want a DVD or CD of a SERVICE?

- contact the church weekdays between 10am and 12 noon
- telephone: 2564 7185
- ask your District Elder
- ask a member of the Ministry Team

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## Welcome to the Spring edition of our church magazine.

We have been challenged by Alistair over the past few months to develop as a 'Close to Home' congregation. While it is easy to consider ourselves as part of our own family, we must also appreciate the bigger family to which we belong. That of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. God has made promises that He will be faithful to us, promises that He will be our God and that we will be His people. We must realise the depth of the meaning of this. As brothers and sisters in Christ, part of His family on earth, we must learn to love each other as Jesus loved us. We are to be content in every circumstance and realise we have each been placed exactly where He wants us to be. In His plan all are equal, even though we may be quite diverse in many ways. Let us, then, develop a nature aimed at encouraging, nurturing and building each other up. Always remembering that He dwells among us and that we are part of His people.

Some contributors to this magazine have openly discussed very personal issues in their lives. We thank them for their willingness to share so candidly with us. As a 'Close to Home' congregation our responsibility is to stand with them, offer our support and show our love, understanding and care.

**Mervyn Orr, Editor**



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# Suffer the little children

Rev Alistair Bates



Most days are exceptionally busy. However, on occasions when I sit down to think about life, my thoughts are troubled by those who do not experience the quality of life I possess. I have, in relative terms, my health, the joy of a wife and family, a loving congregation and a faithful God. I am truly thankful everyday for the good gifts God has given me. Yet, when I reflect on this, almost within seconds, I am reminded that we live in a broken world full of pain and sin. The world is disabled by greed, the misuse of power and the exploitation of the vulnerable. In particular, I am vexed about the condition, violation, brokenness and fears of children and teenagers.

We often think of the plight of children in developing countries, yet sin is global and so is the violation of children in every culture and society, including our own. Recently the Ministry Team heard about the work of Barnardo's at our staff meeting. Julie, who manages the 5 bed residential hostel in Ballymena, shared with us her passion and concerns for the young people she works with. It was heartbreaking to hear of the stories of brokenness and exploitation of the vulnerable just footsteps away from our own building.

The world, and sometimes even the church, is guilty of rejecting these young people. Some children have already been abandoned by their parents, expelled from school and marginalized by their communities. They have no sense of personal worth and every day they die a little more. They become easy prey for those who wish to indulge in sexual exploitation, or those who are able to buy new cars and take expensive holidays profiting from their addictions. Yet Julie who heads up the work in Ballymena is a Christian and into that dark and murky world a beacon of light and hope to these children shines.

I also met recently with the regional coordinator of the International Justice Mission. This organization will be familiar to you because of Lauren Agnew, a member of Wellington. She spoke to us passionately about their work and how they have a mission to free children from modern day slavery. It is soul crushing to think that a child would be sold for the price of a cup of coffee so that they can indulge the lusts and desires of men and women throughout the world. That any child would be trafficked into the sex industry or domestic servitude, not only shows the desperation, naivety or exploitation of parents

but the callous hearts of those who are the real financial profiteers of such criminality.

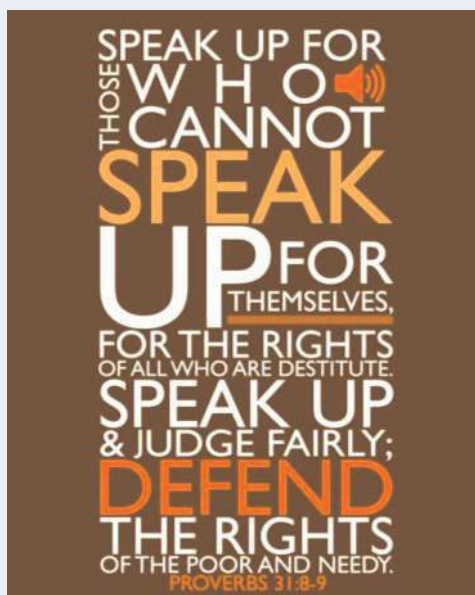
The work of the International Justice Mission is compelled by a deeply held Biblical vision of social justice. We in the evangelical world need to harness our deeply held convictions about sin and the Gospel of Good News to effectively engage in the battle against a corrupted world, indulgent flesh and an unprincipled Devil. One day we will truly see the captives go free.

When Jesus said, 'suffer the little children', He welcomed them into His arms. Let us resource others to welcome them into theirs and, when we can, welcome them into our homes and hearts. We can fight this battle on many fronts. We can support Christians like Julie who are fighting this war against brokenness and pain on home soil. We can join her in so many ways. We can pray for her and the work her staff engage in. We could volunteer to help out whenever possible. We could be less judgmental about the behavior of the most broken in our world. God will judge their sin and those who have sinned against them, but we must love them, pray for them, include them and serve them until the day of grace ends.



Wilberforce began a war against slavery that the church must finish. You don't have to be a profound Bible student to realise that both the Old and New Testament has much to say about social justice and faith in action. Let us stand up and resource those who become a voice to the voiceless and a defender of the weak. The church is called to have a prophetic voice and to challenge the world when it not only enjoys sin, but also seeks to sanction it. We can all do something to enable the children to find the Heavenly Father that loves them with such passion and grace.

As you read this article perhaps you are beginning to think of children and young people that concern you. Perhaps the series 'a close to home congregation' has challenged you to think about what it means to be part of a church family. We want to be a people who do not keep the broken at arms length but welcome them into our hearts, homes and places of worship. We have a great task that lies ahead of us but thank God, He at least, believes we can accomplish it. It is up to us, we can suffer the little children to come to Jesus, or we can just let them continue to suffer. I know which one you want, this is our time to make it happen.



## Aimee's Adventures

One evening, two years ago, I sat scrolling through my Facebook feed when my eyes fell upon a shared post entitled the Baby Drop Box. I was intrigued and, as you naturally do, clicked on it and began to watch the video. I watch many a video as I sit scrolling through my daily feed in a monotonous habit but this one was different. It was heart-breaking and captivating and every part of me watched those disabled babies being saved, wishing I was there holding them. It's no secret I've always had a heart for children with special needs but in that moment God also revealed a deep desire to go to Asia. At first I naturally assumed God was sending me to South Korea but, as time prevailed, that was not meant to be (yet!). I have battled with where I should go for the last year and half. It was only recently, when God opened up opportunities, that I had a peace about it and knew where He was calling me to go.

You may know that God sent me to Taipei in January to work with Envision. As a ministry of the C&MA, Envision identifies and develops future missional leaders who innovate, establish, and strengthen communities of faith in key urban environments. I will be working alongside them for 2 months and then flying to the Philippines to work with Helping Hands, Healing Hearts for 3 months. The ministry began in

2001 in response to the needs of sick Filipino children. As a volunteer I will be working with children in the Children's Recovery Unit (CRU) and orphanage in Olongapo City.

Aimee left on Sunday 15th January and before she left she said, "I'm beyond excited and scared at the same time but I know God is guiding me every step of the way." If you would like to follow Aimee's journey you can read her blog where she will attempt to upload a weekly post sharing how God is moving. Please remember Aimee in your prayers. Should you wish to consider supporting the ministries financially don't hesitate to get in contact with her.

### Pray that Aimee:

- will have no issues travelling to Taiwan and the Philippines
- will settle in and get along with her host family and those she'll be working alongside
- will experience God doing the unimaginable and deepen her faith further
- will overcome any fears or anxieties about the medical settings in the Philippines and will be enabled to do whatever God calls her to do.

Keep up to date with Aimee's adventures in her online blog - <http://aimeesadventures.getfoundni.co.uk/>

# Time each day alone with God!

Eleanor Drysdale



the time, and even more so as life has gone on.

The study 'When God's people pray' really spoke to me about the prayer life of our Church family. The DVD teaching session opened with a view of people queueing to get into the prayer meeting. What struck me was that it was 5pm and the Prayer meeting didn't start until 8! I've spoken with people of differing ages who have been to the Brooklyn Tabernacle. They all made the same comment that the presence of God at the prayer meeting was tangible. People prayed on their own. People prayed in small groups. And when the meeting started at 8pm they all came together to pray for what was happening within the Church family. The DVD also showed interviews with people whose lives had been changed by prayer, either through praying for others or being prayed for.

Just after Easter last year I had the opportunity to take a 7 week Sabbatical to study the area of Prayer. I wanted to concentrate not only on my own prayer life but also that of the congregation. At the end of the time I wanted to have something could take back into the life of the Church.

I choose three studies:

**'Lord teach me to pray'** by Kay Arthur, a study on the Lord's Prayer.

**'When God's people pray'** by Jim Cymbala, Brooklyn Tabernacle Church.

**'When God prayed'** by Don Wilton, a study of John 17.

Added to this was a trip to London for the Hillsong Colour Conference for Women, where 10,000 women gathered for teaching and worship. I also looked at a series of three teachings by Craig Groeschel under the heading of 'Dangerous Prayers'. These were Search Me, Break Me, and Send Me. All three are available to view online in YouTube.

At the very start I set out what I wanted to achieve from the Sabbatical. I had a dedicated area to come to each day to spend time not only in study but, more importantly, with God. I wanted to make a breakthrough in my own walk with God as there were blocks that I needed to push, though I needed to clearly define them first. I wanted a much more intimate relationship with God, to know more of Him and to allow Him to have authority, access and control over every area of my life.

In the days leading up to the Sabbatical I found a book called 'Discovering Spiritual Whitespace' by Bonnie Gray. It was about spending time with God and how Jesus used solitude to connect with God. Each morning I used this book and each afternoon I studied 'Lord teach me to pray,' and then moving on to the other studies.

Each area of study taught me something new about God and something new about myself. There were times when God really did a work deep within me. I can genuinely say that it has made a massive impact on my walk with Him. Those weeks were precious at

Throughout the life of Jesus on earth we are shown that He spent time with His Father. No matter how busy or difficult things were, He made time. He got alone with God. Each of us needs to do the same. We need to have time each day alone with God. We need to find a space where we won't be disturbed, take our Bible and notebook and read, talk, and listen to God. He has been longing to spend time with us even more than you have with Him.

Thank you to all who prayed for me during this time and sent me texts of encouragement. They were really appreciated.







**Victor McAfee**

Prayer Ministry Leader says

**“JUST DO IT!”**

as he reviews prayer in Wellington

Elisha saw more miracles than any other prophet because he saw potential where others only saw problems.

God is never limited by His ability or by a lack of power, His only limitation is our capacity to receive all that He wants to pour out on our lives.

During July and August last year Wednesday evenings took on a different dimension. The Wellington leadership decided to have a time of corporate prayer each week rather than the normal break from midweek meetings that happens over the summer. Together we enjoyed fellowship and prayer as we heard what God had been doing. We gave thanks and asked for more.

We spent an evening in the autumn with our young people in theBigFeed. They had asked, "Why bother praying?" We simply shared stories of how we had experienced God answering prayer. It was a power filled evening, glory to God.

The monthly Saturday morning prayer times this season have been focused on praying with and for people involved in different occupations. This ties in with our teaching of being missional regardless of where we are. We began with those involved in education and we had the privilege, as a church, of partnering with Cambridge House Grammar School. The story, told

by Elizabeth Houston, starts below!

Some of our team attended "healing on the streets training" and some have already served on the street. Jonny will keep you up to date with this.

At the start of this year Alistair felt led to use prayer ministry during one of the morning services. While I was on 'Well' duty, we were by all reports blessed by Alistair's obedience to God's leading.

Prayer team training is ongoing and we plan to spend a Saturday morning in March in prayer and training led by Derek McKelvey.

We seek to follow Paul's example and pray for God's power. As Alistair taught us recently we must ask God to make us more like Jesus. It's all about Him, not us. May we develop into a community of "faith and action".

The Nike advertisement says, "just do it". Sometimes we too have to "just do it".



## **“Just Do Something”**

### **Crown Jesus Ministries One Way Event in Cambridge House Grammar School**

For a year the special Crown Jesus Ministries (CJM) One Way event had been in the plans of Grounded (the Senior Scripture Union) in Cambridge House Grammar School (CHGS). The teachers and student committee had sought the school's approval, subject teachers had been approached about classes being taken by Christian musicians and the CJM team, rooms and

assembly halls had been booked, tuck had been bought, the school was covered in posters and flyers ... and then!?

Three weeks before the actual event the CJM team came to Grounded to enthuse the young people for their part in the whole event. It was easy to sit, listen and pray that the Lord would speak to the students and give them a

passion and the courage to go out and "just do something". That was the challenge and I continued to pray that the young people would respond. Little did I realise that the challenge was going to become a very personal one!

The following day I received a phone call from Victor McAfee, explaining that the folk involved in Wellington's Prayer Ministry



wanted to actively be involved in prayerful support for the Cambridge House Outreach. "That would be brilliant," I thought. However the next parts of Victor's plan came as a real surprise - he wanted me to share in the morning service and also to lead the Saturday morning prayer time featuring educational issues and the CHGS outreach in particular.

As I look back I realise that I was a lot like Moses at the burning bush - this task wasn't for me and I made several excuses to get out of it. But Victor agreed to let me think about his suggestion. Almost as soon as I left down the phone my thoughts went back to "just do something" and I knew that I could not expect the Grounded members to rise to the Lord's challenge, if I was not prepared to do what He was asking me to do.

Thus began the amazing privilege of seeing the local church supporting a the local school with prayerful interest and concern. The Lord alone knows all that was, and may yet be, accomplished for His Kingdom because of that partnership in the Gospel.

The One Way event resulted in R.E. and Music classes having fun, as well as clear Gospel presentations, for the first 3 days of the week. There were special lunchtime events such as "Deal or No Deal" for both Junior and Senior pupils. As well as pupils

winning considerable amounts of money, the Good News of Jesus was clearly shared each time. On Thursday we had cage football at lunchtime and all that day the very hardworking CJM team were busy totally transforming the Assembly Hall for the evening event.

It was such a blessing to know that many Christians, including the folk in Wellington, were bringing all that was involved before the Lord in prayer. And yet we wondered just how many of the school pupils would actually arrive when the doors opened. In the end about 250 young people came, most of them unaware of the volume of prayer that had been, and was continuing to be, offered on their behalf.

The first part of the evening was full of fun, with music, games, video clips, teacher-gunging and general mayhem, but gradually the pace began to change as we listened to the interview with Paul Marshall, the Ulster Rugby Player. He clearly explained how much Jesus means to Him and the young people were left in no doubt about what it means to be a Christian in sport.

Mitch, from Crown Jesus Ministries, presented the Gospel and asked if any of the young people wanted to find out more about becoming a Christian or to recommit their lives to God. We were thrilled to watch over 30

make their way to the front. They were guided to the Counselling Room, where the team of counsellors, including the local Scripture Union E3 workers, were able to chat and pray with them and give them suitable literature. It was also reassuring to know that CJM were going to lead 4 weeks of follow-up in both Junior SU and Grounded.

Since November the CJM. team and the SU E3 workers have worked hard to link those young people, who wanted it, with their local church.

Isn't it amazing what the Lord can do when we take up His challenge to "just do something"? Everyone involved with the Outreach is very grateful to all of the folk in Wellington and other churches, who attended the Coffee morning, gave donations, prayed and took any interest in what was happening.

Please continue to pray that the Lord will go on working in the lives of all the young people who were impacted during that week. What a privilege to be involved in it all - as Victor said in reply to one of my excuses, "we are all in this together!" I'm glad I listened!

**Elizabeth Houston**

*(Elizabeth, a former 6th Form Study Supervisor in CHGS, now volunteers part-time with SU in the school)*





# Faith + Action in Beirut

**Our friends Veronica and Ghassan, and the church they belong to in Beirut, are an example of the book of James in practice.**

Just before Christmas last year Toni Bassett and Gareth and Carol Williams spent a week in Beirut observing and participating in God's love in action among the Syrian refugees in Beirut. We still give prayerful and practical support to Veronica and wanted to back that up with a visit to meet her church family in Resurrection Church Beirut (RCB).

"We were amazed at the work that was being done by a relatively small congregation. They have 5 services each weekend - 3 in their

own building and 2 others in different locations. This is to meet the need of their own Lebanese people and the Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Imagine the commitment this requires from those preaching, leading worship etc. As well as these 5 weekend services they run a teaching programme each weekday afternoon for Syrian refugee children.

"And there is more! They have 'small groups' of mainly Syrian women - 90 small groups(!) in total, meeting weekly for study, prayer and practical support. We visited 2 such groups in a run-down part of Beirut, meeting people who had left everything behind in Syria as the fighting

drove them from their homes. We met some who were now following Jesus, serving Him where they were, while waiting to go back to Syria (sometime). One of the exciting developments for RCB has been putting their morning Sunday service live on the internet, so that many can listen to God's word preached and sung in Arabic, even in neighbouring countries where sharing the gospel is not allowed".

Please pray for Veronica and Ghassan, with children Nour, Jeremy and Christina. Pray also for the RCB and it's pastor Rev. Hikmat Kashouh.

**Gareth and Carol**

**Pastor Asad with the Arabic Bible**



**The Syrian 'small group' we visited**



Wellington Record





For five years we have heard of the plight of Syrian people, the war in their country and those forced to flee the land as the crisis deepens. Then the newsflashes pass and we are back to our own everyday issues and so we don't necessarily think about Syria until the next headline appears.

In visiting Lebanon to see Veronica, Ghassan and their family, it was meeting Syrian refugees that had most impact, causing me to consider what really happens behind the news headlines.

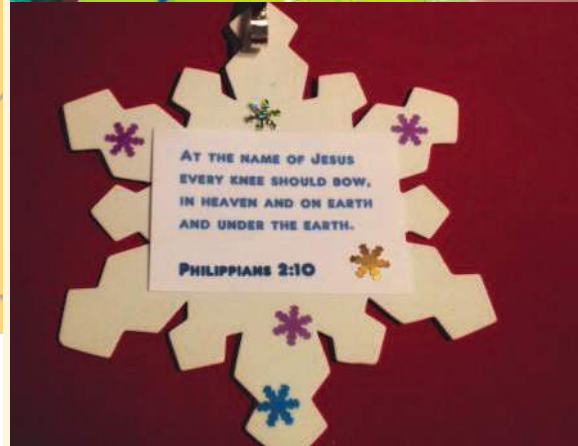
As a small country, surrounded by Syria and Israel, Lebanon is bearing the brunt of this refugee crisis - over 1.1 million Syrian people have been displaced and taken up residence in Lebanon; they now make up 1 in 5 of the Lebanese population. Over 100,000 Syrians have moved into the Naaba district of east Beirut over the last three years. While this has major logistical implications for the city's infrastructure it has also opened up incredible opportunities for Christians in Beirut to share their faith with these seemingly 'hopeless' people.

Resurrection Church is meeting practical needs through assistance with food, toiletries and medicine

and addressing spiritual hunger as Syrians hear of the Lord Jesus Christ, many for the first time.

One lady we met had arrived in Beirut from Syria three years previously, along with her five daughters. In time, she heard the Gospel message and gave her life to the Lord. She has grown in her faith and is now leading five 'Life Groups', small group Bible studies, where around thirty people meet to hear God's Word and ask questions about the Christian faith. In visiting one of these groups we were inspired by the excitement the ladies had as they listened and asked questions of their leader. Though I couldn't understand what they said in Arabic, the 'light bulb' moments were beautiful to watch as ladies of all ages came to understand what God's Word has to say to them.

God is using Lebanese Christians to reach out to Syrians, people from a country with which they were formerly at war, and He is abundantly blessing their ministry. Resurrection Church has now around 90 Life Groups discipling some 900 people; the scale is mind blowing and shows God's ability to "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." (**Ephesians 3 v. 20**).



"One in 3 Syrians is now displaced with many fleeing to neighbouring countries. Iraq continues in its violent instability with little hope of a permanent solution. Tensions are on the rise in Jordan and Lebanon as the Syrian refugee crisis threatens to overwhelm them. Yet despite these huge challenges the gospel is prospering in ways that in the past were only dreamed about in late night prayer meetings. God is shaking the nations."  
(Near East Initiatives)



Each one of these refugees has a story of how he or she came to be in Beirut; we do not know the heartache they have and all that they have left behind but these women asked us to pray for them, that God would meet their needs and they would one day be able to return to their homeland.

This outreach has an enormous financial cost for the Lebanese church so please pray for the work of Resurrection Church and consider whether you can give to support it. Veronica and Ghassan have a real passion to serve their community so please pray for them as they share God's Word

and minister in various ways to adults and children.

Please pray for Syrians who have been given refuge in Northern Ireland and those who serve them here. Pray for opportunities for Christians to reach out to these people as they struggle with a new country, language barrier and how to process all that has happened to them and their families.

The Tearfund Walk this year is on Friday 17th May at Shane's Castle in Antrim. All money raised from the walk will go towards supporting Syrian refugees living

in Beirut, so come along and support this very practical ministry.

On 4th December children in the Sunday evening Kids' Club made Christmas decorations for Syrian refugee children and these were sent to Veronica to distribute (photos on previous page). The children in Wellington were really responsive to hearing about Lebanon and their messages to the Syrian kids were both heartfelt and inspiring. Thank you to all the children who took part - your gifts were a blessing in Lebanon!

**Toni**

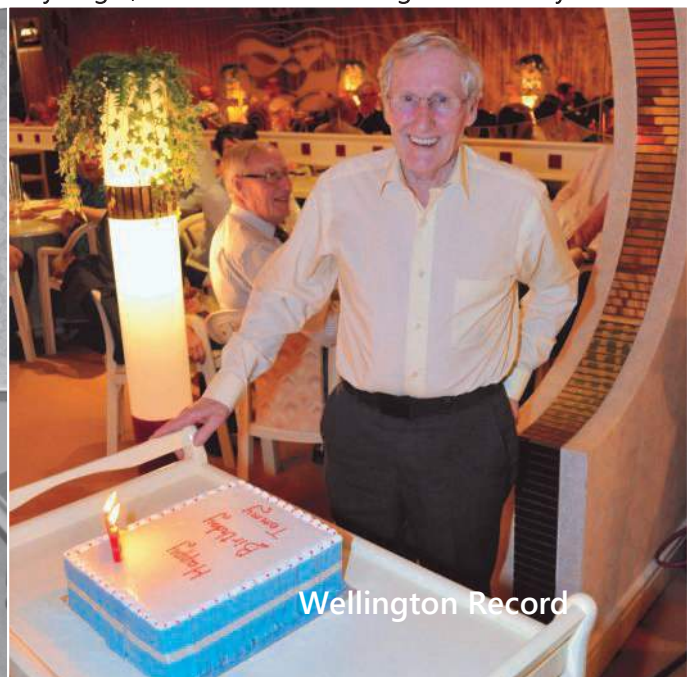
## Men's Fellowship Christmas Dinner



Above: Men's Fellowship members and guests enjoying the programme following their Annual Christmas Dinner held in TBF Thompson Ministries in Garvagh on 17 November 2016.

Below left: The Wellington Quartet (James Anderson, Sam Caves, Andy Jordan and Robin Lindsay), accompanied by Elizabeth Green, sang following the Men's Fellowship Dinner

Below right: A surprise Birthday Cake for Men's Fellowship member, Tommy Adger, to mark his forthcoming 80th birthday!





## Metka and Goran in Slovenia

### Our biggest miracle!

It is because of His grace that we are able to live, love and serve. We are so thankful for God's miracles that we can see everyday in our lives.

Personally, our biggest miracle is our wee girl who is coming in 2 months time. The doctors first told us we cannot have children but God is so much bigger. We are thanking God for her every day and are so excited to meet her soon. Another big miracle is Goran's mum. She has been struggling with addictions for her whole life. It was hard for her to listen about Jesus and her pain and bitterness were very deep. One day she called Goran and suddenly God melted her heart - she surrendered her life to Jesus. What an answer to prayer. Please keep praying for Metka's family because they need Jesus.



God has been blessing the ministry in Slovenia as well. We are now serving in 5 different cities, helping churches and small Bible Study Groups to reach out to the children and their families who don't have any church connections. We are also training the new leaders and helpers for the work in that area. It's God's grace that He is bringing so many new children and believers who want to be part of it. This week one dad called us and said, "We are Muslims but we want you to organise our daughter's birthday." We are thankful to see what God will do in this family through His love and forgiveness. We hear many testimonies. "I have never heard about Jesus before but the love that I experienced in the Good News Club is bringing me back every week." God has a plan for these lives. Since last autumn Goran is more involved in working with men and discipling them. More and more are coming to the Men's Group and want to study the Bible together.

Thank you for praying for us and for all the love we get from you. We thank God for you!

**Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. John 1:16**



## Sergey and Julia

### Growing Church in Ukraine

"In 2002 our small Baptist Church started construction of a new church building. In 2009, with God's help and donations from many friends, we moved into a small part of the building. Over the next few years it was filled with new people. Some of them were seeking God and others brought children to the various activities that we offered. Today it's always busy and there is not enough space. Children's classes are actively full with people, not only on Sundays but every day! The Youth and Sports room, which has become our sanctuary, has 280 seats. It is not spacious enough to accommodate all the people that are willing to visit our church or events that are held there."



"In May 2017 we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of our church. And we hope and dream that around that time we will have our new spacious sanctuary with 500 seats. In order to fulfil our goal and to move to the new sanctuary we need approximately \$175,400. During special fundraising for building the church people contributed \$25,000 and that was a big blessing during this financially difficult year. We are grateful to everyone and thankful for God's guidance."



# Panha - 'Everywhere I go I take his story with me!'

International Justice Mission is the world's largest anti-slavery organisation. IJM's mission is to 'rescue thousands, protect millions and prove that justice for the poor is possible.'

**Lauren Agnew**  
Intern with IJM



There are days when this internship with IJM in Washington DC feels like a dream. I can see the Lincoln Memorial as I walk to work. I can see the Pentagon from the window of our high-rise office building. I share a hallway with the former director of NCIS; I rub shoulders with FBI agents. There are days when I feel under-qualified; like I ended up here by accident. Then, there are the days when I just can't comprehend how good God is. There are days when I hear of successful rescues of men, women and children from slavery and trafficking. There are days when I hear of justice systems transformed. There are days when I see a glimpse of God's justice on the earth.

On a daily basis I wonder how this Ballymena girl ended up in the US Capital. Each time I'm reminded that I serve a God whose

plans are much greater than my plans (Isaiah 55:8). A God whose faithfulness knows no ends. I am not here through doors which I opened. I'm here through doors which God has opened for me - and He has walked with me through them.

For me, this journey towards living out Isaiah 1:17 'to seek justice', has been just that - a journey. I want to remind you of that little boy I met in Cambodia in 2015. His name is Panha and he was bought and sold for sex for \$2.50 per night. Now that I have seen the reality of sex trafficking - I feel responsible for doing something about it. That little boy was a big part of the reason I studied law - to enable me to 'speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.' (Proverbs 31:8). Everywhere I go I take his story with me. I've brought his story with me to Washington DC.

I am truly living the American Dream as I spend these four months volunteering as a legal intern with International Justice Mission. IJM have their headquarters in Washington DC and they work through 17 field offices throughout Africa, Latin America, South and South East Asia. Their casework involves sex trafficking, police abuse of power, property grabbing, slavery, bonded labour and cybersex trafficking. My role at HQ involves assisting IJM's General Counsel in their internal legal work as they seek to support all that is happening in the field offices. Due to the nature of this work, some of the assignments I have been involved with have been difficult in terms of content.

IJM is a Christian organisation and we start each morning with a time of individual 'stillness.' The whole of HQ is silent between 8.30





and 9am and we use that time to pray, journal, read the Bible or to just be still in God's presence. The whole office gathers again at 11am for prayer. There's rarely a day goes by that I don't have tears in my eyes during prayer (and I'm not a crier - ask Hannah Bates or Rachel Keys!). At this stage I'm not allowed to share the content of what is said during this time of prayer - although I desperately want to. I wish you as a Church, could sit in that room and just listen to the prayers - and watch and wait for them to be answered. It is truly inspiring. I have listened to bold and persistent prayers and I have seen them answered - because our God does not stand far off, and He does not ignore the cry of the afflicted. (Psalm 10:17).

I have seen pictures of young boys who have hours previously, been rescued from labour trafficking in Mumbai. Their clothes are ragged; their hands and faces covered in dust - they have been forced to work without pay for hours on end. I have seen videos of 24 young boys as they are brought off Lake Volta in Ghana. Their smiles, their laughter - the joy on their face as they are **literally freed from slavery**. Some of them as young as 6 years old. One young boy, with a broken wrist, had been forced to fish on the Lake - others were suffering with Malaria. Most of them were covered in deep

wounds and bruises. We have prayed for ongoing rescue operations in brothels in Cambodia and the Philippines. We have seen young girls rescued from cybersex trafficking. We have seen perpetrators of child sexual abuse in Latin America convicted for their crimes. **We have seen God answer our prayers.**

We have our Global Prayer Gathering happening in March. The reality that there are more than 45 million slaves across the world can feel overwhelming - but we are not overcome. IJM's work of justice is grounded in prayer and I would love for you to join me in praying for this work. The end of slavery begins with God's people. **It begins with you.**

IJM are courageously seeking justice for the oppressed, and the work is not without danger and opposition. In June 2016, IJM human rights lawyer and investigator Willie Kimani accompanied IJM client Joseph Mwenda during a trial about police corruption and abuse of power. Shortly after leaving the courthouse, Willie, Josephat Mwenda and their taxi driver Joseph Muiruri were kidnapped. Their tortured bodies were discovered in a nearby river eight days later. The perpetrators were the very police they were bringing a case against. The trial for their murder is currently underway in Kenya.

As we receive constant updates at HQ of the progress of this trial there is a sense of deep sadness for the families of these young men. Accompanying this is an undeniable sense of urgency and reality. We need God to move. We need to pray for **justice**. Not just in Kenya, but across our world. For the 45 million enslaved. For the young men and women in bonded labour. For the children trafficked, sexually abused and exploited on a daily basis. **We need to seek justice for the Panha's of this world.**

Gary Haugen, CEO of IJM once said, 'When our grandchildren ask us where we were when the voiceless and the vulnerable in our era needed leaders of compassion and purpose, I hope we can say that we showed up, and that we showed up on time.' We, the Church, are part of God's plan to provide justice for the poor, the oppressed and the enslaved. He doesn't need us, but it is a privilege that He chooses to use us. We need to show up. We need to show up **now**.

I am in a support role during my time at IJM HQ and whilst neither you or I are in the field, **together we as a Church can be on the front-lines through prayer**. Please join me on the frontlines.

**Until all are free.**



Pre-Inauguration Celebrations



Lincoln Memorial



Visting Trump!



Fun on the National Mall



# First Experience of India

Lisa Compton reports on becoming part of the Ballymena India Team working with ASHA in the slums of Delhi



On the 11th February 2017, 14 of us from all different walks of life set off to India with one purpose, to serve our King Jesus!

God had put a desire in my heart for India a number of years ago, and He finally gave me the opportunity to go. I feel very privileged to have been there.

During the 2 weeks I had the opportunity to work in two slum areas - Peeragarhi and Seelampur. In each slum the 4 ladies in the team were able to spend time with both the women's group and the children's group.

Each morning the women came and I was able to do some massage for them. I felt so blessed to be able to make them feel special as most of them would never have experienced a professional massage. While that was going on the other team members taught them crochet, nail painting or just relaxed with some colouring books specifically for adults. We wanted to show them the love of Christ in a practical way!

We were invited to some of their homes and honoured with 'chai' and food! Jonathan Boyd joined us in each of the two areas and led a Prayer Meeting with the ladies, and we had opportunity to pray for some of them.

Each afternoon with the children, we had a theme for the day e.g. the first day was 'God Loves Me'. We had games, crafts, English lessons, singing and a Bible story to go with each theme. Face painting and parachute games were also popular. I enjoyed teaching a group of the older children a dance/mime to the song 'Who Am I' by Casting Crowns. They performed this for the women and children on our final day.

On a few of the days we also met a group of students. I was extremely inspired by the passion and love they have for their own people and how they want to make a difference and give back to their own communities. One girl called Annie (pictured above right), a first year university student, really stood out for

me. She spoke with great enthusiasm and fire and I believe she is, and will be, a great example and role model to children and young people in her slum.

Back at base in the evenings we heard a bit about what the rest of our team had been doing. The 10 'builders' were based in 2 areas. They were building a house for a disabled lady (pictured below left) and her family in Savda Gevrha, where they had worked previously. They made a dramatic difference to the life of this lady by providing a brick house for her family who had previously been sharing a dwelling with 2 other families. They also did some badly needed renovations to the Asha headquarters. They were encouraged by the inspiring stories they heard of young people being helped through the education system by Asha and now making a difference in their own communities.

The main Asha clinic is used by many people each day, and as our small group of men did repairs there, they also made a big

Rani (disabled) and her son Aman



Jonathan praying with one lady



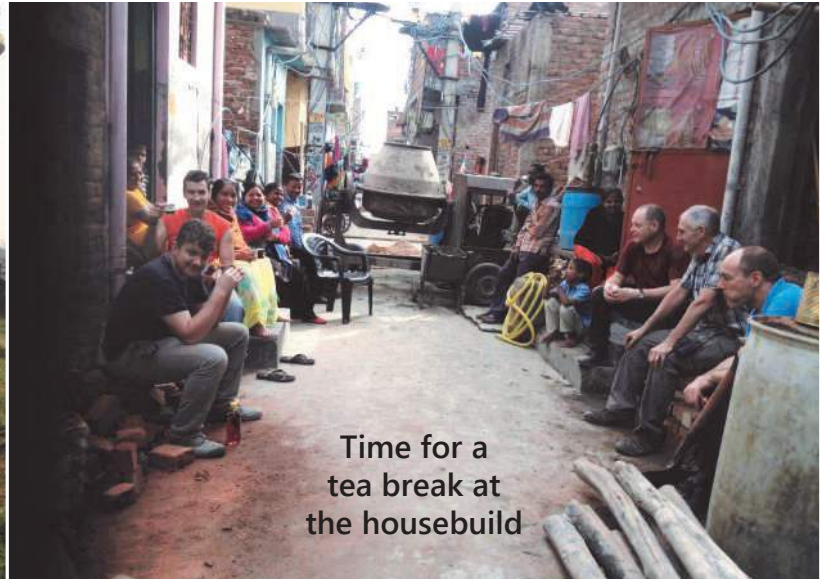
Jonathan and Ronnie tiling







Relaxation and games  
in one of the slums



Time for a  
tea break at  
the housebuild

contribution to Asha's work and encouraged the staff who work there tirelessly.

Jonathan, our assistant minister joined in with the builders and helped with the children's work. Most days he also spoke at Prayer Meetings in the different slums where Asha works.

While in Delhi, I had the opportunity to meet Dr Kiran Martin and her love and passion for the Lord Jesus Christ really shines so brightly. She has truly made a lasting impression in the lives of individuals and entire communities! Jesus is using the work of Asha to speak into the lives of people living in these slum areas, people for whom in the past no-one cared.

**Jesus said, "Truly I tell you whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."**

Matthew 25 v. 40



Paul bricklaying



March 2017

Children with the craft made at the mobile Health Bus



The 2017 Ballymena Asha Team in Dehli



Rani's house taking shape



George drilling







## Pauline Kennedy Women's Ministry - What comes to mind?

In June 2016 I was appointed as the Women's Ministry and PW Development Officer serving within the PCI Council for Congregational Life and Witness.

I contribute to the Christian ministry and mission of PCI by supporting the ministry of Presbyterian Women, and assisting in developing strategy and coordinating of women's ministry throughout our congregations. The heart of this role is to encourage, equip and enable women to know they are valued by God and that their identity in Christ has real purpose with His mission at its core.

What comes to your mind when you hear the words 'Women's Ministry'. Is it young mums in jeans having crucial conversations in the church café? Is it women sitting in straight rows in a church hall? Perhaps it's women of all ages at a conference listening to a speaker? Or red cheeked women serving tea in the kitchen? Is it women gathered in prayer and Bible study? Or women with hands outstretched in worship?

Can all these fit together under the label of 'Women's Ministry'? Is women's ministry more than what we do in our groups or more than our programmes? Can women's ministry happen in diverse ways among intergenerational women throughout our congregations?

Recent research, in nineteen Presbyteries, reveals a number of ways in which PW and women's ministry in the Presbyterian Church is delivered:

- a) Through PW groups.
- b) Primarily through PW groups with additional events and activities to draw in a wider group.
- c) Without a PW group through a more informal programme of events and activities for women.

This picture challenges us to recognise the diverse nature of women's ministry. We no longer have one model and one approach does not suit all. As one PW leader put it, "One size doesn't fit all!"

Many women are at different stages in their walk with God and in their commitment to be part of women's ministry. Some have not yet made a commitment to Christ and need to be personally challenged with the claims of Christ on their lives. Others, who may have been Christians for many years, still need to be disciplined and built up in their faith.

We need, therefore, to find ways to support and develop these different approaches to women's ministry throughout our congregations. To grow we need to evaluate, listen and understand women's perceived and real needs and we need to examine *what* we do and *how* we do it. Not only do

we need to hear from the leaders of existing work, but listen to what ordinary women in or out of our pews are experiencing. Then we must find the best ways to draw alongside to encourage, equip and challenge.

Nancy Guthrie shares these thoughts on women's ministry;

*"...the highest aim of ministry among women is to prepare women for that great and terrible day. Surely if we prepare women to do good work in the world and to have good relationships and to be good wives and moms but don't prepare them for that day, then we have ultimately failed. Will not all our sound theology and creative communications and interesting events and well-attended gatherings be in vain if our ministry among women does not result in being surrounded by the women God has placed in our lives now, when we stand before Him on that day?"*

As women's ministry in the Presbyterian Church continues to grow, expand and develop we need to seek God's guidance to find our congregation's place in it. There is much work to do in the future and I believe it's only through prayer that the hard work can be done. Let us use this powerful weapon, given to us by God, to develop His work within our churches and, let us be encouraged to be involved in His plan for His world...

**"For we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which he has prepared in advance for us to do."**

Ephesians 2:10

Our P.W. group meet on alternate Tuesday nights from 7.45 to 9.15ish. We have a great bunch of ladies who enjoy fun and fellowship together. We have a mixed programme with speakers from various Christian organisations, a night out and an outing in May. We love to see new ladies joining - it's a great way to meet others and make friends. We finish with a cuppa - and a lot of chat!! You will be made welcome! Pauline Kennedy, (article above) was a recent speaker, telling of her new role in Women's Ministry within PCI.





# The Cousley Family Down Under



Glenn and Julie Anne Cousley, and their family, served with MAF in Africa for 10 years before moving to Mareeba, near Cairns, in North Eastern Australia at the beginning of 2016. Still with MAF, Glenn is training as an aircraft engineer.

## Glenn

I ride out to the hangar 2 days each week, to fit some exercise into my weekly routine. I have now joined the RDO – Rostered Day Off, and I work 9 slightly longer days with the 10<sup>th</sup> off. This is what all the MAF guys do here in Mareeba, but I was unable to join in until now!

Since attending my brother's wedding last year back home, I have been working in the hangar. This has given me a really good period of time to work with the other MAF engineers, without all the stress and worry about passing exams. Just after Christmas the team finished a major refurbish of a PNG aircraft and in late January we started on another aircraft, also from PNG, for the same treatment.



I have just started back to studying again for the Physics exam. Although I didn't actually fail this exam, I need a slightly higher pass to be eligible for a licence, which is my main aim at the minute. It would have been a lot less stressful for us had we known all this 2 years ago. But God does not make mistakes. Just as the potter shapes and moulds the clay, so he shapes us, and with the help of the fire, we are gradually changed. It is not always easy, but what a sight to behold when you see the finished product. He thinks we are perfect!

We have settled into a Baptist church, where there are many other MAF colleagues. Some have been overseas and others are preparing to go. We have a very busy Sunday school (where Julie Anne helps), Youth group and Mainly Music organisation. Our Life Group is also attached to this church.

We are planning to visit NI this Summer, coming back early June and leaving late July. We would love to catch up with as many friends and supporters as we can during that time. Dates for speaking engagements can be slotted in now, and we plan to communicate these in our next Prayer letter.

## Joshua

I'm just over 14 and 6 feet tall! I now tower above Mum and am very close to the height of Dad. People say I have grown very fast, but it can't be that fast as I haven't really noticed! I'm just starting term 1 of our 4 term year in Year 9, and have been selected as Year group leader. Jack Sibthorpe (also MAF) and me were nominated as year leaders, and didn't mind which way it went, as there would be a leader and an assistant. I have just signed up to begin the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which isn't very well known over here. The skill that I hope to develop is Kayak Polo and I'm planning to learn to roll with the paddle by the end of my Bronze Award.



My brother and I really enjoy helping with the younger children at church. It helps the grownups and allows us to learn how teachers get along with the little kids, as well as showing us some good ways of dealing with them when they don't want to be quiet or listen. We will be off to Brisbane soon for a 1-day Children's ministry course called IGNITE. I am really looking forward to this and especially the young leaders section of the course.

## Benjamin

I am  $12\frac{3}{4}$  (nearly a teenager!) and settling back into the new school year. We have been swimming this year and have just had our school swimming carnival, competing in 4 houses named after well known Australians - Gregory, Kennedy, Leichhardt and McKinlay. We have a school prayer meeting once a week and a number of MAF kids meet there, along with a few others. This is supported by a Christian teacher in school and we meet in her classroom, sometimes with the school chaplain. I train at gymnastics with my group of friends and there is lots of competition among us! As a family, we went on an adventure with our church early in February. It was a mountain bike ride one Sunday afternoon, about 10km up and down lots of hills and through rivers. Everyone was soaking from the river water and sweat!



## Esther

I am 9 years and 4 months old, and fantastic! I am the youngest and smallest in the family, but Mum says I am not the quietest! I enjoy everything, from working at school to exercising in the gym. Unfortunately I am not old enough yet for Scouts or Youth that my brothers really enjoy. I like playing with them as they are a lot of fun, but sometimes I have quieter games in my bedroom, playing by myself or with other girlfriends with my LEGO Friends. I also enjoy being creative with writing, playing teachers and using my white board. Just before Christmas I spent all my pocket money - and I was saving for about a year and a half - on a pair of roller blades. They are a lot of fun and I love to slip them on and skate up and down our driveway. I think they'll be much more fun when the temperature drops below 30° and it becomes a bit cooler. I have also been attending a class to learn sign language and we sometimes perform at town celebrations. I am hoping to learn to play an instrument through school, and will find out soon if that is going to happen or not.





## Julie Anne

*A typical week for me seems very busy - all unsalaried!  
Here's an example!*

Monday: Exercise, drive the children to school, volunteer 8-9 am in Uniform shop at the Primary school, attend Esther's Primary school assembly, sometimes meet to pray for the school, Bible study with 3 other women (2 MAF and 1 young Christian woman), home around lunch-time to do some housework, prepare afternoon snack (for children) and prepare tea, volunteer in Tuck shop 3-4.45 pm at the Gymnasium, snack for Benjamin and Esther before gymnastics, homework with Esther, home to prepare tea, collect Benjamin and Esther from gym .....



Tuesday: Ride bikes to school, MAF Ladies prayer morning (praying for local work in Mareeba and Cairns and around the world e.g. PNG & Africa and for each other), then home, house work, prep food for snacks and evening meal, emails, prep Prayer letter, snack with children from 3-3.30 pm before swimming, I swim while 2 younger children train with club, Joshua to football from 6-7 pm .....

Wednesday: Exercise, ride to school, volunteer at Mainly Music, a programme for Mums and Pre-schoolers in the Baptist church where we worship, light shopping and messages in town on way home, prep snack and evening meal, meet children for snack at 3 pm before gym, home to finish/start food prep, Joshua and I play Kayak Polo from 6-8 pm .....

Thursday: Ride to school, Social Tennis with elderly, free morning, children ride home by themselves with no after-school clubs, Benjamin and Joshua Scouts from 5.30-7.30 pm .....

On alternate weeks we do 'Life Group' while boys are at Scouts (sharing food and studying the Bible with other families).

Friday: Exercise, drive children to school, shopping, cleaning/house work, baking/cooking, leader at Youth Group at Baptist Church, Benjamin and Joshua both members ....

### The weekend at last!!!!

**Temperatures** are still very high and it's difficult to cope with the humidity, which is about 80% on average. It feels like walking into a sweat room, a very different feel from an oven which has a very dry heat. This makes camping very difficult, so most people do not camp much over the hottest part of the year. We are looking forward to camping again soon.

Please pray that we will have enough **Youth** leaders to take the Youth group back up to a weekly run event within the church for the second term of the school year (after Easter). We had many young people (mainly from our church) on our first night back at the beginning of February, with about 26 the first night, and 28 the second night, when we drove down to Cairns for 1 Youth (a big termly youth rally).

Pray that they will continue to listen really well during the study time and that those who don't already believe in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord will choose to make that important decision.



We would love to hear from you folks back home!

Our email addresses are:

[glenn.cousley@gmail.com](mailto:glenn.cousley@gmail.com) and

[julianne949@gmail.com](mailto:julianne949@gmail.com)

If you would like to receive a regular Prayer Letter from Julie Anne and Glenn, please speak to either Roger and Elizabeth Green (Julie Anne's parents)

Email: [eliz.roger44@gmail.com](mailto:eliz.roger44@gmail.com)

Phone: 07702 575862



## **'We love hearing about what God is doing among His people'**

**Steph and Jo Graham**

### ***A little about us ... Stephan and Jo ...***

This is where I'm supposed to tell you how fabulous and interesting our life is, but in reality we're just an ordinary, everyday, run of the mill couple. Married for 19 years, we live in Kilrea and share our home with our amazing 14-year-old nephew Jack, my 90-year-old father-in-law, Tom and our cuddly (but very smelly) basset hound, Tilly. Oops! I nearly forgot the boss, 'Yoda' the cat. When we're not working (in the Agri-business/education sector), we mostly love spending time with our family and friends.

We're certainly not any kind of remarkable Christians either, but we do love Jesus and His Church and are continually learning (and relearning) how to walk with Him in everyday life.

When Mervyn asked us to write a little about ourselves for the magazine, we kinda laughed a little and thought ... *"Why, it's only us?"* ... in writing about 'us' we were actually boring even ourselves! To be honest, the things we find exciting don't really have much to do with who we are but who 'He' is and we love hearing about what God is doing among His people.

### ***Our 'Welly' Family ...***

Stephan and I started coming to Wellington (or 'Welly' as we call it) around 3 years ago on the recommendation of a friend who had never been but had heard in the town that God was at work in that church. Being used to a different 'style', we were slightly hesitant about coming to Wellington for the first time. On the way home from our first visit, Stephan said, *"I'd really like to go back Jo, it was very obvious to me that there were people in that place who love Jesus"*. The rest is history and we became members just over a year ago. We love the guys at Wellington and during our time there we have been hugely encouraged, built up, challenged and dare I say, at times rebuked. Wellington has not only impacted our lives personally, but at times others connected with us. We have loads of stories but let me just share just a few examples of times we've been really blessed by our 'Welly Family'.

### ***A friendly church ...***

A while ago now, I was involved in teaching teenagers who, for various reasons, had left secondary school. Many of these kids came from very difficult backgrounds and their lives were now very broken and messed up. This was

true of a couple of girls in my class and, almost from the outset, one of them in particular decided she was going to be trouble for me. At times they made my life very difficult, even to the point of trying to get me fired! I constantly prayed that God would keep them in my class, no matter how challenging, so I would have the opportunity to show them the love and grace they craved. God was so faithful and almost a year later, Stephan and I were able to take these same girls out for dinner for their 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> birthdays.

One of their birthdays fell on the same day as the Wellington 'Christmas Connections' service and so I asked if they would like to come to church with us before going out for dinner. To my amazement they said yes and so these two young women sat through the whole service completely mesmerised (if a little hungover). I chuckled as one of the girls whispered to me just before the start, *"who is that guy that keeps walking about at the front and what's he doing?"* She was laughing, having just noticed him slip and nearly fall on the front step! *"That's the minister,"* I informed her, *"Alistair"*. *"What's the minister?"*, she asked, completely serious.

This young woman had never been in a church in her whole life! Not even on school visits to church because she'd been either moved or thrown out of every school she'd ever attended. I prayed then that these girls would see Christ in the actions and words of my brothers and sisters that morning. When Alistair mentioned there was coffee afterwards they eagerly asked, *"Can we stay Jo?"* I'm so glad I agreed as their first experience of being around so many of God's people turned out to be so sweet. I couldn't believe the amount of you guys in



Wellington that took the time to be friendly and speak to them in the hall that morning. No sooner were we in the car when, one of the girls said, *"Jo, your friends in there are really, really nice, totally not what I expected church to be like."* Before we'd even made it out of the car park, they were on their phones to their relatives in Belfast excitedly relaying their first experience of church. Her words just warmed my heart so much, that so many of my church family had shown love and kindness when perhaps it had not been expected. So thank you all *so much* for that! Who knows what lasting impact you may have had!

### ***A Silent Witness for the Homeless...***

One afternoon, in the kitchen, as we were packing food parcels to go on one of our trips to feed the homeless in Belfast, my nephew Jack said, *"Jo wouldn't it be great if we had something we could put in with the food for the foreign people, as we can't talk to them or them to us. We should try and get some tracts in their own language so at least they would have something to read."* "Yeah you're right Jack" I responded, *"but I'm not sure where we'd get them, we'd probably have to order them online."*

The very next morning at church somehow the subject came up in conversation with Stephen and Agi Clarke when Stephen said, *"I have loads of tracts at home in foreign languages that I sometimes give out in Belfast and you can totally have some!"* The very next week he came to church with his glove compartment stuffed full of these tracts in various languages!! Just fantastic!

### ***A Word in Season...***

On another occasion, one night when I couldn't sleep (as is often

normal for me), I decided to listen to a random teaching of Alistair's from a day we'd missed at church (not saying that Alistair's sermons would send you to sleep mind!!).

The next day at work, a discussion arose amongst some of the teachers over lunch, questioning why people really went to Church. In a staffroom, where I was the only Christian, I was so grateful for these recurring conversations but I was also keenly aware then that my life would need to match up to my words. Anyway, on this occasion, one of my colleagues began to tell me her story of how at a young age she had turned her back on God. Raised Jehovah Witness, her perception of God was completely skewed/distorted and never had she thought of Him as a loving Father. She told me of an incident that had stuck in her memory of a Bible story book she had as a little girl. She loved the pictures and one in particular of a 'dancing girl'.

*"Jo, I loved this girl, she looked like a princess and she was exactly what I wanted to be when I grew up. One day as I was reading the story, a member of my family came up behind me and slammed the book shut. She said, 'God doesn't love those type of girls, they are wicked and He wants nothing to do with them!'"* "You know Jo", she went on, *"the thing is, that's just the type of girl I am. I'm not good enough for God and with the things I've done in my life, God definitely wouldn't want me."* "Who was the dancing girl?" I asked. *"I can't remember now, but it was something to do with her helping these guys escape out her window on a rope."* "Was it Rahab?" I asked. *"That's it!"* she exclaimed, *"Rahab."*

My heart missed a beat because the 'random' teaching I had listened to at 3am that very

morning was Alistair's sermon titled *"Rahab - it takes all sorts!"* I was able to share the gospel with her from that message that was still so clear in my mind. With tears in her eyes, this young woman sat there in the staff room and said, *"Jo I never knew there was a God like that in the Bible and I never knew what He did with Rahab. I can hardly believe you listened to that last night, that has to be more than a coincidence."*

I knew it was no coincidence and prayed for another opportunity to speak to her again. She had gone home and discussed it with her husband and parents and had loads of questions. At the Wednesday Prayer Meeting that same week, Alistair urged us to speak God's Word directly into people's lives rather than depend on our own. I have a tendency to talk too much and so I prayed, *"Lord let it be your words that speak to her, not mine"*. The very next morning, at 10 to 9 just before start of class, she came bounding into the staffroom, *"Jo, I can't get what you've been saying out of my head and look"*, she pulled out her phone to show me, *"last night I went home and downloaded the Bible App onto my phone and I'm reading it! I need to find out more about what this is all about."*

What an amazing answer to prayer from the Wednesday prayer meeting! God was speaking His Word right into her life Himself! What a timely word!

Sometimes, I feel very blessed that God has placed us in Welly for this season in our lives. I know we as Christians get a lot wrong, but I also think that there are many of you that are also getting so much right and Stephan and I have been so encouraged through knowing you ... so thank you!





## CHRISTMAS GIFT SERVICE

4 DECEMBER

The children brought gifts to lay around the Christmas Tree - these were donated to the Belfast City Mission Christmas Toy Appeal

The children also sang and staged a Nativity Play







Tots & Co Christmas Party - 7 December



Trying out the new Crèche soft play area on 29 January



March 2017

23





# If God is with us, Who can be against us?

**Stephen and Agi Clarke**

Agi and I met at a Night Club in Belfast in 2004 and, believe it or not, it was a case of love at first sight! On that first night we had a long conversation which covered a wide range of topics including marriage, our church based upbringing and God. When we met, we both believed that there was a God but neither of us were Christians. There is a Pink Floyd song called, 'Wish You Were Here' and a line in it says, 'we're just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl...'. I think that's a good way to describe our lives at that time. A wise man from the East once commented about not glorying in the gory events of your past life and so I won't.

Both Agi and I were brought up in loving Christian homes and both attended church throughout our childhood. When we left home, we also left our respective churches. After getting engaged, Agi said that she'd like to get married in Eskylane, which was her family church. When we met with Rev Brian Boyd to discuss the possibility, he said he would be delighted to marry us but if we were to be married in his church, he would like us to attend his church. I have to admit, at that point in our life, attending a tiny church in the middle of nowhere between Antrim and Ballymena

every Sunday morning hadn't been anywhere on our list of priorities. We played the game, attended the church and were married there in August 2007.

In hindsight this was all part of God's plan. Before we were married we were looking for a house to buy. We had looked at countless properties in Belfast, Ballyclare, Parkgate and Doagh, but ended up buying a house on the Steeple Road in Kells, just 1 mile down the road from Eskylane church! This was not in any way handy to Belfast for nights out. After our honeymoon and, because of where we now lived, we decided we may as well continue going to Eskylane, and so we did. The more we listened to Brian preach the Gospel the more we actually started to hear what he was saying, just as Jesus said in Matthew 11 v. 15, "he who has ears to hear, let him hear". By the grace of God we gave our lives to the Lord on Thursday 17 April 2008.

There was no blinding light moment. Our lives didn't suddenly change so everything was rosy in the garden. If anything, it was the most difficult decision that we have ever made. We realised, in light of the sacrifice that Jesus had paid for us on the cross, that we

had to walk away from our old lives in Belfast. I am reminded of 1 Corinthians 7 v. 23, 'you were bought with a price; do not become a slave to the world.' We became distanced from our old group of friends, not because they stopped speaking to us but because we stopped doing the things we used to do. We just drifted apart. Not only that, but when we became Christians it seemed like there was an expectation on us to 'be like Jesus'. This was just crazy as we were still the same people trying to work through the same issues, except now we were looking at life through a different lens.

We joined Kells Church as Brian Boyd was the minister of both it and Eskylane. There was more on for the kids at Kells, so we thought that made the most sense. Over the next few years we were blessed by the birth of Jane and Emily. Whist at Kells we became friends with James and Siobhan Millar. They were a great influence on us and really helped us to learn about and grow in our faith in a very practical way. One year at Mandate in the Waterfront Hall I mentioned to James that I was struggling with my prayer life. He suggested I attend the prayer ministry course that was starting in Wellington a few weeks later.



That course was amazing and was another milestone in our lives. It opened our eyes to the Spiritual side of things.

Agi and I began to realise that there is more to Christianity than going to church on a Sunday morning. We wanted and expected more, and prayer was the key to getting that 'more'! We have come to realise that when you stop everything, take a step back and immerse yourself in prayer, you will hear God's voice. It is as if he has been speaking to you all along but with the busyness and noise of life you miss him standing at your door knocking, ringing that doorbell, wanting to come in and be part of your life. We have been faced with a number of big issues in our lives and tried in our own strength to sort them out. We quickly realised what we really needed to do was get our grubby little hands off the problem and hand it over to God. At that point we received the clarity required to understand how to proceed in the particular situation.

We felt God was calling us to move to Wellington and we joined by way of Disjunction Certificate in January 2014. Since we've been here we have been further blessed with the birth of our third daughter Olivia. With our girls we try to do all that we can to make God and prayer an integral part of our daily lives. We see praying as a

natural response to all situations and trust our children too will learn to rely on God in all things. We want our children to see our love for Jesus through our relationship with Him and not just a legalistic performance on a Sunday. We just love to see them thirst for knowledge of Jesus and their delight at learning more about Him. In Psalm 127 we read, 'like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth' and so we realise that the best Sunday School that our kids attend is right here at home with us. We want their lives to be firmly built on Jesus from the very outset, so that when the storms of life come against them in later years they can stand firm, like the man who built his house upon the rock in Matthew 7 v. 24. We love being able to enjoy family time with the girls especially outside, whether it's going for walks or planting and growing vegetables and fruit in the garden. I'm not sure which the girls enjoy more, messing about in the mud planting the seeds or eating what they have grown.

Over the years we've had many debates and discussions with people over various 'religious' issues, including whether it's ok to eat out on a Sunday; whether it's ok to drink alcohol; whether you should be baptised as an adult; or which is the right church to attend, to name but a few. Do you know what we realised? No one

has the right answers to any of these questions because everyone's perspective is different, and everyone's life experience is different. What we need to be responsible for is trying to do our best to live our lives in a way that accords with Scripture and trust that God will show us the right way, as it says in Proverbs 3 vs. 4-5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your path."

The world presents everyone with individual challenges. We constantly come up against the world and its popular media that promotes the 'church of me' and the idea that if it feels good, do it. No matter what it is! Trying to navigate through all the grime of life while keeping our eyes on Christ is really difficult. We are so thankful to God that that we have been blessed with a number of really good Christian friends with whom we can discuss life and how we deal with it.

When times get tough we pray. When times are good we pray. Our relationship is at its best when we are in daily conversation with God. We read in Romans 8 v. 31, '...if God is with us, who can be against us?'

If God is with **you**, who can be against **you**?

## Holiday Bible Club

We are delighted that Steven and Agi have agreed to be the overall coordinators for this year's Holiday Bible Club that will be held in June. Please remember them in your prayers as they prepare for this important event in our Church calendar. Pray that God will bless them as they take on this new responsibility and pray for the large team of helpers that will support them and that, together, God will use them to speak into the lives of our children and their friends as they attend.

**Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children."**

Deuteronomy 4 v. 10



# 'The Cattle on a Thousand Hills'

Amos Kennedy



I returned to Kenya for three weeks in January of this year. It was a pretty hastily organised trip. I was glad to be back in Tuum, a small, remote village in Samburu Country, in the Northern part of the country to spend some time with long-term PCI missionaries, Stephen and Angelina Cowan. I am familiar with this area, having spent a couple of months here in 2014, visited just last July with my Dad and it was here that I grew up with my family when we lived in Kenya.

Before leaving I didn't have any sort of detailed plan of what I would be doing day by day. I was, however, sure of one thing that the Lord was calling me to go so He could teach me more about the country and His people there. He has laid these people on my heart and given me a passion for them. He is also growing my understanding of overseas mission so I will be able to cross cultures in a useful and informed way for His name. God was deepening my understanding of Him and of the fact that glorifying God is at the core of all mission.

There are monthly seminars held in Tuum, where Stephen and Angelina are based, as well as many other people based projects. For example there is a garage where young guys who have left school at an early age are taught how to be mechanics. They build Land Rover's from scratch and repair many more. A lot of

important work surrounding the major cultural issue of FGM is also ongoing.

Since late December there has been a severe drought across Kenya. The rainy season in October/November didn't bring as much rain as usual, and crops and livestock are dying. Traditionally the Samburu are a semi-nomadic people who consider their cattle to be their livelihood. Many young Samburu men spend their days herding cattle and defending them, with guns, from attacks by other rival tribes such as the Turkana people who live further North. Cattle rustling is not uncommon and people from both tribes often kill each other during cattle raids.

The drought varies in severity across Kenya, giving rise to different problems in different parts of the country. In Samburu, drought means that many cattle die of starvation. Samburu culture dictates that selling your cattle for money before they die seldom occurs, unless maybe to pay for urgent needs like school fees or treatment for a sick family member. During drought cattle are often herded across parts of land where they don't usually go, often bringing their cattle to the point of starvation, as well as many other problems.

What remains true in the struggle of these issues is that God is sovereign. While these issues are

extremely difficult to challenge in the midst of seemingly hopeless and desperate situations, we know that the Lord is still working in ways not visible on the surface. See Isaiah 55 vs. 8-9 and Jeremiah 24 v. 7. He is in control. We read in Psalm 50 v. 10,

***"For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills."***

My three weeks turned out to be fairly busy. Stephen had asked me to spend some time talking to the guys in the garage about historic events and to explain how these events had changed the world we live in forever. As they also work in a number of other villages around Northern Samburu, a lot of my time was spent between Tuum and 4 other smaller villages, all of which are some 2-3 hours apart. As we went around the villages, with the guys who worked in the garage and some leaders from the Church in Tuum, we fixed gearboxes of vehicles used by the mission in these more remote places, 'reconstructed' a water tank to make it more effective for crop irrigation, attended much smaller church plants and brought people back to Tuum for the monthly seminars.

I was given the opportunity to speak at one of these seminars. I followed on from the theme of change in history to what Jesus has to say about change and



repentance in our lives. That afternoon we looked at Matthew 4 vs. 12-17, where Jesus began his time of preaching and ministry by commanding us to,

**“Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.”**

This was probably the most difficult part of the trip as I really wanted to get the message across to people’s hearts and minds in a relevant and understandable way. It was particularly challenging as many at the seminar couldn’t read or write. However, as I was preparing, God reminded me that it wasn’t my job to persuade people to trust in Him. I was to present the Gospel and it would be up to the Spirit to reveal to the people their need for Christ.

As many of you probably know, I grew up in Kenya. My parents, Norman and Pauline, had been PCI missionaries and we moved back to Northern Ireland in 2007 when I was 10. Up until then Kenya seemed like home to me. I now feel that God is calling me back to Kenya to serve in some form of long-term mission. When folks ask me if I’d like to move back at some stage, the honest answer is yes. Exactly where and when are

questions only the Lord knows the answer to at this minute.

I believe that, even now at university, God has given me a heavy heart for His people in Kenya. Many are still lost. Jesus said in John 10 v. 16

**“I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.”**

I really believe that God is calling me to be where I am at the minute, serving in the Bread charity. I also believe He will call me in the future to serve Him in Kenya, to witness for Him so He can save lost souls. Through the great love of Christ that is now within me, I have been given a great love and passion for Kenya and for His people there.

Being involved in the ongoing work of Bread is a blessing and God continues to honour the work in Kenya for His glory, even when funding is low. Through support for the education of students, the provision of water tanks, church planting and evangelism, people are being helped, both physically and spiritually.

I believe that the Lord continues to lay overseas mission on my heart. From growing up in Kenya and subsequent trips back, God has grown my understanding of the core purpose of what mission is about. Our faith as Christians does not have mission as an optional extra. Missional theology should be a central aspect of our faith in Christ, as well as being at the heart of our Churches.

Perhaps part of the problem as to why we don’t consider overseas missions in this way is because it is very easy to put overseas missionaries on a pedestal and consider their faith to be so much stronger than anyone else’s. But this isn’t true. Jesus commands *all* of us to be missionaries at home

and abroad, and calls us all to be involved in the work of His kingdom across the world. Those who live at home, as part of a Church, need to play their part in supporting overseas missionaries, just as the Bible commands us.

I was told by a missionary once that he felt their work more difficult over the summer season as churches at home tend to have fewer activities and hold fewer prayer meetings during that time. So while I believe there is a real need for long-term overseas missionaries, I also believe that we, as Christians at home, need to make more of a commitment to support God’s work overseas, even though we may never be in such places ourselves.

Let us ask God to give us more of a heart for the sheep that are not of His fold here in Northern Ireland, and to give us a sense of the same love that He has for His people across the globe who don’t yet know Him as their Saviour. Perhaps this would lead us to live more sacrificial lives for His glory.

Bwana Yesu asifiwe



March 2017



27

## **Change? Challenge? Counsel?**

**Together we  
can see the  
whole picture!**



As a relative newcomer to Wellington I have taken my time to settle in and listen to what God would have me do at this age and stage of my life. In many ways the warm welcome given to both William and I by so many gracious people has made settling in easy. However, at times, managing change is not easy, whether it is moving house, school, job or church, facing redundancy, breakdown in relationships, or coping with illness or death. Moving church after 30 years has, for me, been a challenge, albeit a positive one, as we can become too comfortable, even stuck in our ways!

We have found a place we can call home where there seems to be an openness and willingness among the people to respect difference ... difference in worship, in prayer, in ideas about activities, in each other ... and to put Christ and His love first. There is an expectation that God is present when we come together and meets with us wherever we are at in life. That is exciting.

I have enjoyed the settling in period and have learned that my identity was not caught up in what I did before. My identity is who I am in Christ. I have, over the years, spoken at women's conferences, church weekends, retreats and

quiet days where I had the privilege of meeting, listening and praying with many people of all ages. Many of these people are waiting for something to change in their lives or relationships, for a breakthrough in their pain and difficulties or for healing in their body, soul and spirit. I meet the very same challenges in the counselling room, in prayer ministry and in my own life.

One can have a feeling of being a 'square peg in a round hole', and I can identify with this scenario! I have had many roles within the church over the years, not least as GB captain. I have to say, and others would too, that this was not a 'great' thing. It was more of a 'good' thing. You see, I never really got the hang of marching. I just couldn't get my feet in tandem! Humility was called for. I never cease to be amazed that God can bring good out of anything. He sees our heart and my heart was for the girls and, seeing them come to know Jesus as Saviour and Lord, made it all worthwhile.

I then had the opportunity to be involved in prayer and prayer ministry and I felt 'at home' with it for over 20 years. I also had the privilege of teaching in Bible College and in churches throughout the UK. Meeting with people and enabling them to

reach their potential, to even take little steps forward in life towards health and wholeness has been and remains central to what I do and who I am. Change and challenge have been an integral part of my life having been a nurse, midwife, health visitor, lecturer and counsellor. I can now see how the threads were being woven over the years, although I may not always have seen or understood at the time! Hindsight is a wonderful thing!

Through my work with people in ministry and counselling I meet real pain, real life issues, real people who are frightened to share how they genuinely feel with their Christian friends. Perhaps even as you read this article you can identify with the words and the feelings, even if the issues are different. Many live with the tension between, on the one hand, believing and holding on to the promises of God, while experiencing what seems to be the opposite. The Kingdom of God is now, and the Kingdom of God is not yet fully come. Herein lays the struggle.

As a senior accredited counsellor with CRUSE and Inspire, as well as in a GP and Private Practice, I work with adults, couples, children and young people. I specialise in relationships, depression, anxiety, trauma, abuse and bereavement and supervise other counsellors.

Frequently I am asked how my Christian faith links to my role as a counsellor. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to address this, and to demystify what goes on in the counselling room.

I discovered, when faced with the challenge of how my faith fitted with being a counsellor, that the values inherent within counselling were core to what I



believe as a Christian. Respect for others, including their right to autonomy, being trustworthy, demonstrating integrity in all I do and putting others first are core to counselling, whatever approach the therapist takes. Building relationships and maintaining appropriate boundaries is also good practice, as is ensuring accountability for what we say and do in our friendships with others, whether within the church or in the community.

Professional organisations governing counselling and supervision also emphasise moral qualities which, as members, we are expected to embrace within our work. These again include many qualities I would aspire to in my Christian walk ... being caring and conscientious, empathic and sincere, having wisdom and humility ... all of which we find in Christ.

While respecting an individual's right to their own beliefs and values is paramount, how do I embrace my beliefs yet remain unbiased and non-judgemental within counselling? Does it mean I leave my beliefs at the counselling room door? I look to Jesus as my role model. Jesus met people where they were at. It was about them first and foremost. I love the way the Bible frequently reminds us Christ 'looked' at them ... the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, Peter and the disciples. I can't help pondering what that must have felt like. Jesus knew and spoke into what really mattered. He had compassion. I try to do the same. I don't always get it right and I don't suppose I ever will this side of heaven!

I don't overtly bring Christ into the counselling room with me, but is He present? Yes, unequivocally yes. My life is hidden with Christ in God and He is within and without.

Christ met people where they were, not where they would like to be! When I struggle with only being able to walk so far with someone, I remember it's His work not mine.

Why do some Christians hold back from accessing help in this way? I'm really not sure, but I am finding that the fear dissipates as people understand more about what counselling involves and how aligned it is to Christian beliefs. Counselling is about having a safe and confidential space in which to share your story (and we all have one) and to express and explore emotions without fear of bias or judgement. It's a space to reflect on the issues and challenges you may want to explore, to help you understand yourself better or to begin to make changes to your life. Christ, himself, assures us of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the true counsellor. It is a profound privilege.

Counsellors and therapists differ in their approach. I work from an integrative perspective and see counselling as coming alongside someone to accompany them on their journey, usually when they are struggling or want to gain clarity as to the way forward. The image of the disciples on the road to Emmaus comes to mind.

Sometimes the very common everyday things around us have tremendous spiritual application for our own lives, depending on how we look at them. Having someone bring alternative perspectives and help us view things through a different lens can facilitate us in moving forward with our lives.

One of the fears or questions raised by people coming for counselling is why do we have to go into the past? The simple

answer is that we don't always. When we do, it's with a view to understanding the present, to process the hurt and pain, to enable change to happen and to help with moving forward in life and relationships. The concept, taken as a whole, is in keeping with the biblical perspective of remembering the past to learn from it. By the renewing of our minds and walking closely with Christ we can be transformed into his likeness and set free from the things that so easily entangle us. Christ knows our past, present and future. He has a plan for each and every one of us even though, at times, we struggle to understand.

I have my struggles like everyone else. At this age and stage, I have more questions than answers about life and faith and I'm ok with that. I have a fantastic God who knows it all, the hidden and the more obvious. He knows the path I take and I'm beginning to see a little more clearly where I fit into the overall picture within Wellington.

As we approach the Spring, what an opportunity we have to ask ourselves afresh, where, in Wellington do we fit in? What is God calling us to do? Who is He calling us to be? It's only together will we be able to see the whole picture!

**Sheila Crothers**





# Do you believe God has a purpose and a plan for your life?

We read in Jeremiah 29 v. 11,  
**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

Surely, as Christians, it's important that we seek to live out our lives for God and follow His will, so we can please Him. Over the last number of years I have been seeking God's guidance on why I do the things I do and for what reason. Are they to please man, please myself or please God?

I was work shadowing your Deaconess, Eleanor Drysdale for 6 weeks during January and February. The reason for this is, back in June 2016, I began the application process to train as a Deaconess in the Presbyterian Church and the 6 weeks placement was part of this process.

I was born on 6 July 1973 into a loving, caring home. My parents are Harry and Agnes and I have a sister, Sandra, and brother, Leslie. My family home is in Saintfield, Co Down where I attended Church and Sunday School at the local Church of Ireland. I also attended Girls' Brigade, Youth Club, Youth Fellowship, C.E.F Club and Good News Clubs at other local Churches/Mission Halls. Even as a young child I knew I needed to be saved, but I didn't do anything

about it. After my dad suffered a severe asthma attack and was placed on a life support machine in intensive care, I turned to God and asked Him into my life. I asked God to save my dad. I was aged 11 at the time.

I became a member of 1<sup>st</sup> Saintfield Presbyterian Church when I was 16 and it was there that I began to take my Christian faith seriously. I wanted to learn more about God and prayer. At the age of 19 I started going on PCI Outreach Teams and, through these, I met my future husband Stanley in Sion Mills. We have been married for 21 years, setting up home in Ballymena and now living in Gracehill. Ben, our son, was born on 6 March 2002, and is currently studying for his GCSEs at Cambridge House Grammar School.

I am currently a member of Ballyloughan Presbyterian Church and have worked at Gracehill Primary School in the Nursery Unit for 13 years. I work with 26 pre-school children age 3-4 years.

At times life has been tough and I often wondered where God was. In January 2001, I tragically lost my dad, who died by suicide. Then I lost my precious baby son Reuben in January 2008 when 20 weeks pregnant. Both these bereavements were traumatic experiences in my life. However I

have seen God's hand at work in my life, even though it has been painful. With God's Grace I am helping others work through their grief and lead Griefshare Support Groups in various Churches. We come alongside broken and hurt people, bringing God's hope into their lives.

After achieving a Christian Counselling qualification at Union College, I began to volunteer with Cruse Bereavement Care. I work in the Northern Area with children and young people aged 4-18 years who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, relative or school friend through suicide, road traffic accident or illness.

I commenced Pastoral Care course in Belfast Bible College in September 2014. During that year I asked God for direction and to open doors. In February 2015, after reading an article 'Prison, pain and potential' in the Presbyterian Herald, I felt God calling me into this area. He opened the door to work as a Chaplaincy volunteer in Maghaberry Prison with Rev. Rodney Cameron, the Co-ordinating Chaplain. Since September 2015 I have been going in once a month on a Saturday to work alongside Barnardo's staff on the Family Matters programme. This seeks to educate prisoners on how to be a better parents. We have just



started an Alpha Course on a Monday afternoon. These are both fantastic opportunities to witness as a Christian and to bring hope into difficult situations. I have found this to be a wonderful blessing in my life.

Again, after much thought, prayer, and through my private Bible study, I decided to push another door. So in June 2016 I applied for Deaconess training. I attended my first interview in December at Union College, after being shortlisted, interviewed and commended by both Ballymena Presbytery and my own Kirk Session. The interview was successful, leading to my 6 week placement with the Church family here in Wellington. Recently I completed my psychological

assessment and my final interview will be on 4 April. Only after this final interview will I know if I have gained a place for the full-time training starting in September.

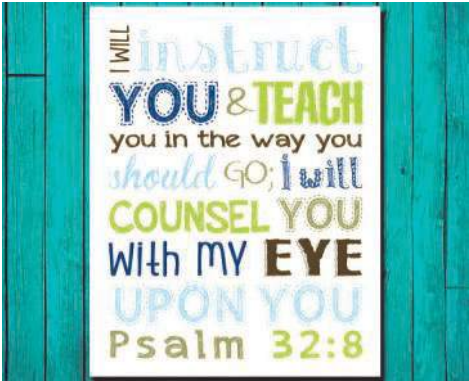
I have been challenged to be more courageous, step out in Faith and leave my comfort zone to go where God is calling me. This has made me trust God more and hold onto His promises that He will never leave me. I have learned a lot during my time at Wellington and would like to thank you for the warm welcome into your Church family. I appreciate and value the many words of encouragement and I would really value your continued prayers.

I would also like to thank Alistair and the Kirk Session for the

opportunity to spend time in your congregation. A special word of thanks to Eleanor for the amount of time that she has given to me, above and beyond her call of duty.

Are you like me and know that God has a plan for your life, yet find it difficult to see? I want to encourage you to step out in the strength that only comes from God and try something new that stretches you. Let God lead you. I believe He opens, and closes, doors when we trust and seek His guidance. I don't presume to know God's plan for my life, especially over the next few months, but I continue to be patient, waiting and trusting in God that His plan and purpose for my life is perfect.

Linda Warwick



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

PSNI Constable Geoff Semple and Boys' Brigade member Josh Marks (centre middle row) and Girls' Brigade members Katie and Gemma Semple (front row) were involved in the wreath laying ceremony during the Remembrance Day Service on 13 November 2016. Included in the photo are other members of the congregation who had formerly served in the forces.





Christmas Lights  
Switch On  
3 December







**Read big. Read real. Read together.**

**"Community Bible Experience has ignited a passion for the Bible in thousands of churches. More than 80% of surveyed participants finished the New Testament in 8 weeks - or less. For many - even long-time churchgoers - it's the first time they've ever read the New Testament."**

**Creation, Life and Beauty, undone by death and wrongdoing, regained by God's surprising victory ... As told in the books of the New Testament, by the Community Bible Experience.**

In September 2016 we embarked on a revolutionary way to read the New Testament, as a whole church community in eight weeks. Quite a challenge! We met each Wednesday evening for nine consecutive weeks to worship together before dividing into small groups to discuss the 'readings' we had completed the previous week. For many within our church community it proved to be a wonderful time of blessing, renewal and encouragement.



Margaret McKeown  
Bible Study  
Coordinator

*Biblica, the International Bible Society, have a commitment to see God's Word brought to people across the world in ways they can understand. They feel the need for more effective Bible engagement and have a passion to develop resources to help. One such resource is the production of the Community Bible NIV version. The books of the New Testament have been reordered and grouped to maximise understanding of the context. Chapter and verse numbers have been removed and introductions to each book are included to help understand the context of each book.*

Over 350 members took up the challenge to read about 60 pages of the New Testament each week. Many regularly attended the Wednesday evening meetings in the church, while others, who were not always able to attend, did the readings and discussed them as couples or families at home. In the church setting it was wonderful to witness many groups, with Bibles open, discussing God's Word and frequently following up with a time of prayer.

There have been many and varied benefits as we look back on the experience. To know that so many were reading large portions of their Bibles regularly/daily and wanting to discuss with others what had inspired, surprised, encouraged or puzzled them was amazing. Many took the opportunity to join different groups each week, giving them the opportunity to get to know other church members. Conversations often continued on Sundays as folks had researched unanswered answers which had arisen in discussion the previous Wednesday evening. It is not easy to put into words all that happened in our church over those nights from September until November but I hope, in reading the thoughts of a few participants, you will get a better insight into the benefit of the programme to our overall church community.

It was a real privilege to have taken part in the Community Bible Experience. The Scripture came alive as I read each reading which was suggested for us each day. I had read Scripture time and again, but this time everything came across as a story, explaining everything in great detail. It was a joy to be part of a group each Wednesday evening and to discuss what we had learnt from the readings. If we weren't too sure, someone in the group was sure to come up with a suggestion. Since taking part in the series I have been drawn even closer in my walk with the Lord. One evening, prior to the series, some members of the 'Spark' team came to the Prayer meeting. It was wonderful to hear these young people really on fire for the Lord. My prayer list has grown an awful lot longer. As I was reading my Bible, during the time my late husband was in a nursing home in 2003, a verse of Scripture came to me. Joshua 1 v. 9, **"Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."** That verse is still relevant today.



Joyce Ferguson

As a child I went to church, Sunday school and many other weekly gospel meetings and almost every prize given was a copy of the New Testament, which, in my lifetime I have read many times. Although excited, I was slightly anxious about the daily reading schedule and attending the meetings every week. Those fears were very quickly washed away as the daily readings and weekly meetings to discuss and go deeper into God's Word were amazing, with the time passing too quickly. The Biblica New Testament is so beautifully put together, making it so easy to read. I honestly couldn't put it down. Even though I had read the New Testament many times and thought I had a fairly good understanding, through this experience I realised there was so much more. It has been a privilege to study together and grow stronger in my walk with God. My confidence has grown and I would encourage everyone to become involved and read this New Testament. Reading and studying together is a life changing experience.



Hazel Marks

The community Bible experience was extremely beneficial to us. Despite occasionally struggling to make time to read, the eight weeks were a great opportunity for us to have almost daily Bible-centred conversations. This helped us grow in our faith, both as individuals and as a couple. We were reminded of the centrality of love in Christian life, whether to each other, our church family, or to unbelievers. The weekly time of sharing with other believers was vital, allowing us to learn from each other as well as helping each other understand difficult sections of the text. In an age when evangelicals are becoming increasingly open to supposed forms of extra-Biblical revelation, we, more than ever, need to be immersed in the Word of God. The Community Bible Experience made an important contribution to that journey, helping us as we strive to be more like the Bereans in Acts 17 who tested everything they heard against the Scriptures.



Matthew and Hannah Houston

From doing the Community Bible Experience we felt that, as a Mums Bible Study group, we got to know Jesus so much more as we "walked with Him" through the gospels. One of the mums who attended put it like this... "My husband and I would never have talked about the Bible before but by doing the CBE readings we've started to chat about the characters in the Bible in normal conversation." One of the things that stood out to us was how Jesus detested the ways of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law who had outward signs of religion but no depth or sincerity in their faith. A challenge to examine ourselves and not to try and "put on a front" (something we're all very good at doing). It was also so evident how Jesus loved to change individual lives - especially the most unlikely of characters e.g. Zaccheaus or the woman who had bled for 12 years.

If we were being honest the CBE proved to be a challenging experience - many of us struggled to keep up with the readings and some therefore felt discouraged. We know that Satan loves to use the weapon of discouragement to make us feel a "useless" Christian and so each week we tried to spur one another on. We found many novel times and ways to read the Bible e.g. listening to the MP3 when doing the ironing or, one of the most popular reading methods, arriving early for school pick-ups and grabbing these precious moments to do some reading!



Laura Mark and Laura McKean

Eddi and I found the Bible study to be therapeutic, it actually disciplined us to read our Bible on a daily basis. Life has a habit of distracting us and God is placed on hold. The Word of God is our spiritual food, without it we die, so reading the Bible is the only way to feed on God's Word and thrive.

The interaction with other members was extremely stimulating, and gave us the opportunity to get to know people on a more personal basis, making us feel part of the church family. Eddi and I are limited in the activities we are able to attend and this can make us feel disadvantaged and alienated at times.

We are excited in the hope that further studies of a similar nature will happen in the near future?



Eddi and Martin Hill



I found Biblica to be a wonderful, yet challenging, experience. I enjoyed meeting in small groups and was greatly blessed and encouraged by the experience and insights of the others in the groups as we discussed issues week by week.

Undoubtedly, and surprisingly, it was the book of Revelation which had the most impact on me. I hadn't been looking forward to reading it, as I knew it would be difficult. However, God used it to speak to me - not because of its difficulty or the many interpretations but simply to rejoice that Jesus is coming back and God will reign forever. Our hope - my hope - will be realised. He will wear the Victor's crown and we will worship him perfectly. The whole world will be full of His Glory and every knee will bow at His great name. In this book I found great peace, hope and joy.

I was sharing this joy with some friends in a prayer meeting I attend and as a result they wanted copies of Biblica to read themselves. So now 5 more people are reading the New Testament in this form. I feel that reading in this format meant it flowed more naturally and gave me a more immediate experience of God's Word, in which I was fully engaged.



Liz Kernohan

Months have passed since we took part in the Community Bible Experience, in Wellington. Reflecting on what has happened since, we realise that, for us, the time spent studying the New Testament over eight weeks, was somewhat of a spiritual oasis. While we spend time reading and reflecting on the Word, it was a period of structured reading, and we especially miss the times, together with others, reflecting, listening and talking about what we had read. It truly was a blessed time. Meeting with others gave us the chance to make new friends and brought us closer to God and closer to other brothers and sisters and we are so glad we were part of it. I believe it would be worthy of repeating the programme in the future



Helen and John Kinnear

The Biblica community Bible experience proved to be the one of the highlights of 2016. When I received the New Testament and reading plan I was eager to get started, but I underestimated the impact that it would have on my faith and how much it would help me to grow spiritually. Gillian and I had read the Bible from cover to cover once over a period of almost 2 years and being totally honest, it wasn't easy going. When I began to read this version of the New Testament I was struck by how exciting it was and how the narrative flowed in a way I had never experienced before, which meant I looked forward to continuing with the following days reading. I found myself more willing to discuss my faith with people outside the Church, which is something that I have often found challenging. The opportunity to look at God's Word in a new light, combined with the opportunity to meet to discuss it with others in the Church really helped me gain a better understanding. The people I met had such a wealth of knowledge and it was wonderful to be able to listen to them, to learn from them and to share experiences.



Steven Dennison

### A final word from Margaret.

Have you been inspired or challenged by the comments from this cross section of our members who took part in the Community Bible Experience?

It is not too late for you to take part in the programme. You can read the book yourself and follow the reading programme that is set out on the included bookmark.

You may also be interested to know that Biblica produces the Old Testament in a similar format as well. It is presented in three books as follows:

**Covenant History**, Genesis-Kings;

**The Prophets**, the Hebrew Prophets;

**The Writings**, the remainder of the Old Testament.

If you are interested, any of these Biblica Books can be obtained from myself, Margaret McKeown.





## CHRISTMAS MORNING SMILES

Below: Chris Fugestad, Josh Fronek and Tyler Hurley joined Sarah Houston at Church on Christmas Day morning. Chris, Josh and Tyler are from Minnesota, USA, and are studying at Bodensee Hof Bible School in Germany (Capernwray German Branch). They were travelling around Europe during the Christmas Holidays and spent Christmas with Sarah and her family just outside Cullybackey.



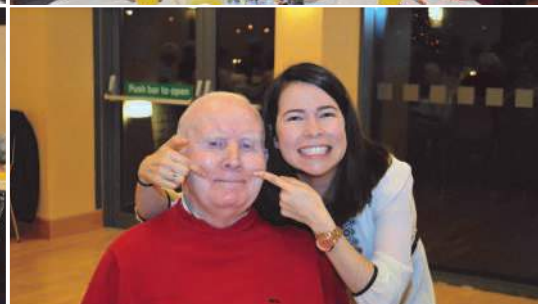




## Our Annual Carol Service was held on Sunday Evening 18 December

Top: Combined Church/Kids Choir; Ryan, Obadiah, Matthew, Julie and Peter read the Lessons; Musicians (plus some kids)

Below: Enjoying a cup of tea and a chat after the service



Wednesday Fellowship  
Christmas Dinner  
7 December



March 2017



37



## NEW COMMUNICANT MEMBERS

(l-r)

David and Clare Moore,

Hugh and Elizabeth  
Houston,

Martin and Jackie  
Addis.

(l-r)

Gareth Blair,

David and Caroline  
Hughes,

Neil and Gillian Fry,

Lisa Gaston.

We welcome these new members into our Church Fellowship. Each of them attended the New Members Course and affirmed their faith at the Communion Service on the evening of 1st January, and have been accepted into full church membership.

(l-r)

Timothy Agnew,

Alison Woodrow,

Paula Lorimer,

Emily Keys,

Bruce Holdstock,

Julie Scott.

Wellington Record



# FIFTY SHADES OF GREY AND GETTING DARKER

I feel compelled to share some thoughts on the **"Fifty Shades of Grey"** films. The truth is, I'm sad! These Hollywood blockbusters have many people eager, excited and running to cinemas to watch them. The latest, released just in time for Valentine's Day, showed it was being promoted as a romance. That I find hard to swallow!

I write these words not just as a Christian woman who is saddened or offended by this movie, but as someone who has had my own heart and mind severely damaged through pornography. I know what it's like to battle with dark images replaying over and over in my mind and how they can affect self-image and worth. I have battled through guilt and shame for many, many years of my life.

The Christian blogger, Aubrie, summed up my feelings when she wrote;

*"This film has started quite a controversy, due to its extreme sexual content and somewhat twisted "romantic relationship".*

*"A variety of people are feeling a little pushed over the limit of what is appropriate and are voicing their opinions. ... is this movie any different? I think it is crossing the line. That fluctuating, invisible made to be crossed line set by movie producers."*

*"I'm sure we've all watched something at one point in our life that has caused our hearts to pound, giving us that uneasy feeling of guilt as we question*

*whether to walk out or turn it off. As believers should we watch anything we want?*

*"When repeatedly exposed to something, your mind will acclimate and readily accept another nudge further. It is the same effect with any addiction. What works for a while needs to be pushed for the same effect".*

To add my own thoughts, unfortunately, the world we live in is a dark place and, without Christ in our lives, it will only get darker.

**"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God"**  
2 Corinthians 4:4

How desperately we need the light of Christ to shine in on our hearts and minds.

**"The LORD is God, and He has made his light shine upon us"**  
Psalm 118:27

No words written on a page can ever express how thankful I am for my own salvation. To know the **life changing power of Christ** in my own life. To know how God's Word can truly change us and how his **Living Word** can renew our minds and hearts. If we want it to!

**"... to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"**  
Ephesians 4:23-24

He has gently and patiently brought me from a place of darkness and, at times, hopelessness into a place of light and true freedom within my heart and mind. I am no longer haunted by images or thoughts that only served to destroy me.

**"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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you,"**  
1 Peter 1:3-4

**"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"**  
Colossians 1:13

**"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"**  
John 8:36

Please, please, be very careful about what you expose yourself to. About what you allow into your life. Things seen can't be unseen. Things heard can't be unheard.

We are reminded by Apostle Paul in Ephesians that we are to,

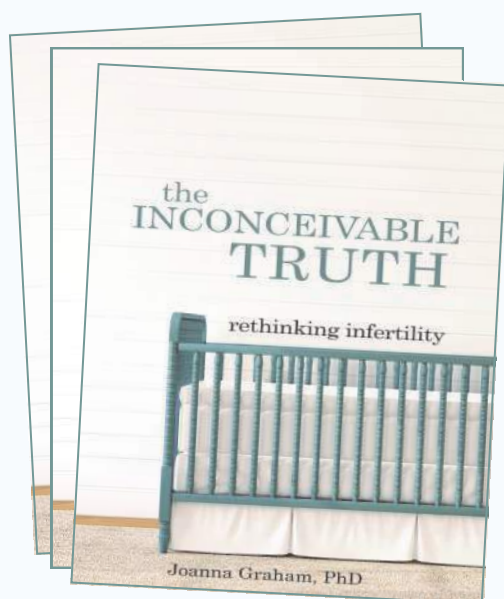
**"Be very careful then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise ..."**  
Ephesians 5:15

Thank you for reading this. It is my hope, if you were or are considering going to see this film, that these words may cause you to think again. Or indeed if you are in that place of struggle with something in your life that is destroying you, no matter what it is, that you may find hope and freedom in Christ Jesus.

**He is the only way!**

*If you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this article please speak to either Rev Alistair Bates or Eleanor Drysdale*





## The Inconceivable Truth

Spring is in the air with the sound of the dawn chorus! Cherry blossoms, carpets of Amsterdam tulips and bouncing bundles of wool in the lush grass evoke a sense of new life and vitality. The excitement of new beginnings is often just how we feel, newly married and full of hopeful anticipation of having little ones of our own. We smile, all mushy, at one another as we share our dreams of 'baby names' and joke about who our little 'bundle of joy' will take after. But, as you begin to notice that while many others are in full bloom and having babies, your little seed is not budding and still you remain 'fruitless'. As the monthly cycle of nervous anticipation, of not daring to hope (while hoping beyond hope),

followed by searing disappointment and despair takes hold on your life, the heartache of infertility ensues, threatening to crush your spirit in its unyielding wake.

### Our Little Book...

As a culture and perhaps even more so as Christians, we're just not very good at discussing infertility. No one really wants to ask questions because they think it might be too painful for you or just plain awkward for them and so people often tend to hide the true impact it is having on their life.

When you consider that infertility affects 1 in 6 couples (although some estimates are closer to 1 in 4) and the size of your congregation, the probability is that within your church family, you are not alone. Well perhaps statistically you're *not alone*, but the reality of life finds many couples never feeling more isolated than during this time.

Being part of the '*1 in 6 club*' is not a great feeling, especially when we didn't choose to join and have no power to cancel our membership. Belonging to *this* 'club' automatically excludes us from so many others, enjoyed during the natural course of life.

How deeply we sense that we 'don't quite fit', feel just a little odd and at times wish we could disappear when we have to respond to dreaded questions most young couples relish.

Knowing only too well some of the struggles many Christian couples face, I decided to write a very simple little book to share some of the precious lessons God taught Stephan and I during our own journey. The Bible has so much to say on this issue and it is imperative that we base our counsel in the Scriptures. In sharing our story, we hope to, in some small way, help others who may be facing the same issues we did.

Although primarily for those going through the trial of infertility, the book was also intended to help our families, friends and church families understand this area affecting so many of our loved ones. The book covers some common issues we encounter including the use of medical fertility treatments (IVF), the impact on marriages, Hope and facing life without children. I do not presume to provide all the answers but hopefully our story will help all of us together to make God honouring decisions based on His Word.

*"Infertility is a lonely journey, a sort of quiet sadness that cannot be easily explained. This book, however, made me feel like I wasn't alone. It was, at times, like reading my own story and it reassured me that my feelings were normal; that others had been there before me; that there was a glimpse of hope. And, perhaps most importantly, that while this experience will forever change me, it does not define me."*

*'The Inconceivable Truth', sensitively tackles the heart-breaking reality that those walking the path of infertility face on a day by day basis. It offers a real Bible based and Christ focused response to questions that Christians must ask regarding the decisions they will face. If you are experiencing infertility or know someone who is, I cannot recommend this book highly enough."*

Linda McClintock

*"Jo has just written a brilliant book as a Christian called The Inconceivable Truth for couples walking through infertility. I am so moved and encouraged to read it and it is a much needed resource!"*

Amy Orr-Ewing, Director  
OCCA (Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics)

*"The first infertility book I can relate to. This could be my story!"*

Becky Smith



## Walk with me

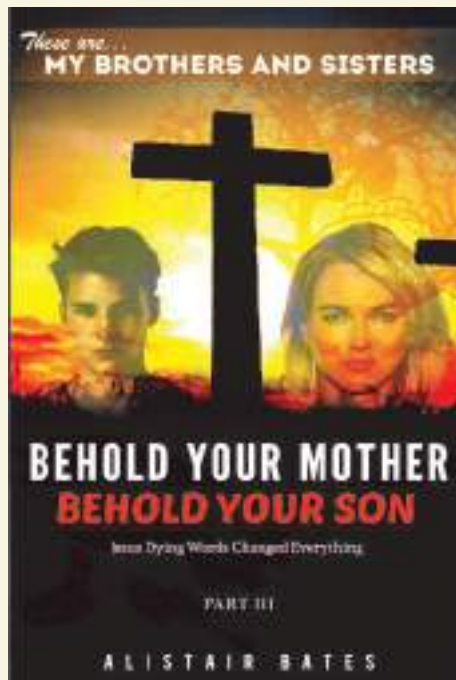
As infertility continues to rise, my hope is that, as church families, we no longer ignore its potential for devastation in the lives of our brothers and sisters, but learn to walk with each other along our very different paths. What a wonderful blessing it would be if 'infertility' was no longer 'taboo' in church and holy relationships were formed, where we began to link the chains of our broken lives together and the church became our place of encouragement, Godly wisdom, instruction and comfort.

Nineteen years on and hubby and I never did have our own little bump. God had other plans for us and looking back now, His hand in our lives seems almost too obvious. It was a difficult road for sure, I will not lie, many times I didn't agree with God's choices or methods. But throughout our journey, the Holy Spirit has changed our hearts and given us treasures we wouldn't swap for anything. Although it may not seem like it now, you are so much more than your infertility, you are not defined by your status as a parent but as a child of God. If you let Him, Jesus will walk so closely with you on this path, He will help you make choices that will honour Him and will lead you out the other end to a place of peace, joy and worship whether He places a babe in your arms or not.

**Jo Graham**

***"The Inconceivable Truth"*  
by Joanna Graham  
is available on Amazon and  
in Faith Mission Bookshops**

Website:  
[info@theinconceivabletruth.com](mailto:info@theinconceivabletruth.com)  
email:  
[www.theinconceivabletruth.com](http://www.theinconceivabletruth.com)



## BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER, BEHOLD YOUR SON by Rev Alistair Bates

Rev Alistair Bates has recently published a sample Bible Study that will eventually form part of a book of Bible Studies. Commenting on the book Alistair said, "I recently have been privileged to write a little sample Bible Study that will eventually become a book. It explores Jesus' final words on the cross and their relevance for us today. The sample is entitled, 'Behold Your Mother' and this thirty-page Bible Study is available as a digital download. Priced at one pound I am hoping to raise some funds for the work of IJM as thirty percent of the proceeds will be donated to their work. Already I have been encouraged by the interest shown in the study. It can be used for personal devotion or small group study". For any who wish to find out a little bit more detail, or to download the publication, please follow the link below.

<https://selfy.com/p/huYC/>

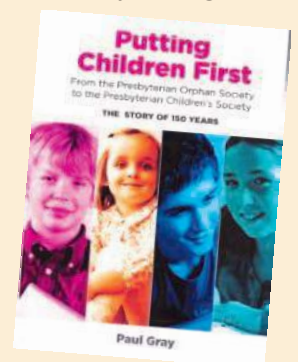
## Putting Children First - Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland

The story of 150 years of the Presbyterian Orphan Society  
(Now the Presbyterian Children's Society)

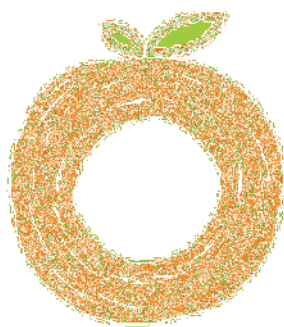
The Presbyterian Orphan Society, founded in 1866, was very much the brainchild of Dr William Johnston of Townsend Street, Belfast, and Dr Wilberforce Arnold, a medical doctor and member of Elmwood Presbyterian Church, Belfast. At the time poverty and destitution was rife in Belfast and children were particularly vulnerable. Started with 175 children, the Society has gone from strength to strength. To reflect the changing circumstances of families and children, the Society changed its name in 1997 to the Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society and then in 2016 to the Presbyterian Children's Society.

This new publication can be obtained from the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland at 26 College Green, Belfast, BT7 1LN or ordered on-line from its website:

[www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com](http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com)







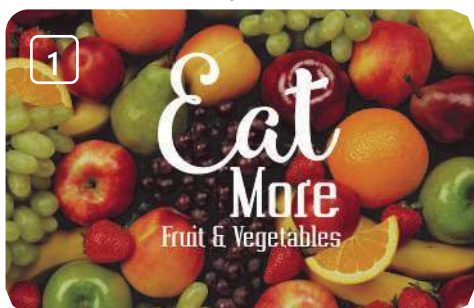
# food for thought

One of our young ladies, Paula Marshall, recently gave Female Focus members 'food for thought' when she talked about nutrition at one of their meetings. Paula is a registered Dietician working with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in Antrim Area Hospital.

At the start of a new year it was thought that the Female Focus ladies might benefit from some information and advice on nutrition and how to eat healthier. This same information is equally relevant to readers of our church magazine.

Can I remind you all of the importance of remembering that each of us is different. Even though God may have created us all equal, we must learn to love ourselves as we are and accept we are the person into which God has made us!

So let me share my top 10 tips to both improve our eating habits and overall bodily health!



- aim that 1/2 your plate is salad or veg, add extra veg, lentils and pulses to soups and stews, add salad to sandwiches if possible,
- swap spaghetti or rice for courgetti or cauliflower rice
- snack on fruit and veg



- Do a self scan - stop, think and decide if you are actually hungry or is it other factors such as perhaps thirst, anxiety or boredom that is the source of hunger.
- Brush your teeth or use a mouthwash once you have finished eating for the day - it automatically switches off consideration of further food intake.
- Increase your intake of fluid, preferably water.
- Stay busy, get enough sleep and manage stress
- Fill up on higher protein foods, eat slowly, eat spicier foods, choose high fibre foods
- Start the day with breakfast and do not skip meals



- are prepared and ready to use, create much less waste and are available regardless of season.
- are free from preservatives and additives and cost much less.

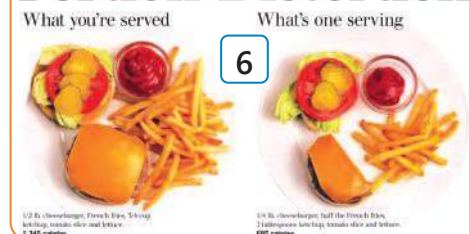


- low fat or fat free foods are often higher in sugar
- the full fat varieties of some foods can be more filling
- overeating is common as they are considered as a 'healthier' option
- they often have no less energy/calories



- less waste as you don't buy unwanted extras
- ensures you have the ingredients necessary to prepare a healthier option
- fewer visits to shops which reduces the chance of picking up 'treat' foods
- allows you to bulk cook and freeze

## Portion Distortion



- buy/use smaller plates
- spread food out over your plate
- use a bowl rather than a plate as it will look fuller



- use a food diary to record food intake for up to 4 days
- track your calorie intake using an app or weigh yourself once a week (same day at similar time)
- measure inches if you can
- take progress pictures
- keep an exercise log
- keep a food and mood diary



- buy smaller size chocolate treat bars
- avoid tray-bakes/cakes where possible or try to share or choose a small chocolate bar instead
- avoid whipped cream
- avoid share bags of crisps and opt for smaller bags
- use diet/light or Zero diet fizz
- choose skinny option for latte/ cappuccino etc as many places use full cream milk
- have a light hot chocolate instead of a chocolate bar
- try sugar free jelly as a dessert with fruit



- choose smaller portions
- choose a thin base pizza and opt for more veg and lean meats like ham and chicken
- for pasta go for tomato based sauces over creamy types
- opt for boiled rice rather than fried or pilau
- avoid creamier sauces and go for Indian Madras or Tandoori dishes with chicken, prawn or veg
- ask for shish kebabs rather than doner, eat with pitta and salad and keep sauce on the side
- choose thick cut chips over skinny fries



- take the stairs, play with your children/ grandchildren or pets
- park at far end of the car park or walk instead of taking the car
- exercise while watching tv and do housework more vigorously, stand when working if possible
- find a friend to exercise with or commit to a charity run, walk or cycle
- reward yourself for being more active

So how does your attitude towards your body image and your eating habits impact on those around you? How important is it to have a healthy attitude to both weight and food?

Always remember that children are especially influenced by what they see adults do. In many ways each of us is the product of what we saw and heard growing up. Body image statistics indicate that middle aged women are least satisfied with their bodies, which may come as a shock to many.

There are much more important considerations in life than our weight, body shape or how we look. Much more important, and the only thing that really matters, is the condition of our hearts!

We spend so much time in our lives thinking and worrying about our outer appearance that, often, we can forget our souls, which are eternal!

Paula

## FEMALE FOCUS

We are a group of 'girls' of various ages (some of us older than we'd like to admit!!) who meet every other Tuesday evening down in Café Aroma from 8 until around 9.30pm. We always start off with a cuppa, a 'wee' treat and a chat before our night begins.

We try to have a varied programme and aim for fellowship and friendship to grow. There's often a speaker from charities or groups with a Christian input, a craft night as well as a relaxing evening, a DVD night and a meal out! We try to make each night a little different and would love any woman from our church or beyond to come along any night. Please feel free to join us and grow in friendship and God's love.

## Deaths 2016/2017

17 Nov	Margaret Keery (Meta) O'Neill	Circular Road	Interred Ballymena Cemetery
22 Nov	Mary (Molly) Agnew	Slemish Care Home	Interred Ballymena Cemetery
25 Nov	Margaret Carson	Prospect Private Nursing Home	Private Funeral
27 Nov	James Gordon	Camphill Park	Interred Ballymena Cemetery
1 Dec	Susan Best	Chapelstown Road, Kells	Interred Ballee Cemetery
2 Dec	Dorothy McWhirter	Inishowen Park	Interred Portglenone Cemetery
22 Dec	Irene Rowena (Renee) Carson	Riverdale Park,	Interred Ballee Cemetery
24 Dec	Margaret O'Neill	Leighinmohr Park	Interred Ballymena Cemetery
21 Jan	Samuel Stirling	Quarrytown Road	Interred Ballymena Cemetery
31 Jan	David Kane	Toome Road	Interred Ballee Cemetery
20 Feb	George Kernohan	Carmossan Park	Interred Ballee Cemetery
3 Mar	Jean Williams	Old Antrim Road	Interred Ballymena Cemetery



## BAPTISMS



**Nina Louise**, daughter of Joel and Lana Andrew,  
Galgorm Road. Included is brother Theo.  
*20 November 2016*



**Isaac Samuel**, son of Samuel and  
Judith McCullough, Deerfin Road.  
*27 November 2016*



**Micah Nathaniel**, son of Alvin and Karen Close,  
Skerdan Road, Portglenone.  
Included are brothers Isaac (l) and Jonah (r).  
*11 December 2016*



**Daniel Matthew**, son of David and  
Andrea Currie, Byrestown Road, Kells.  
*5 February 2017*