



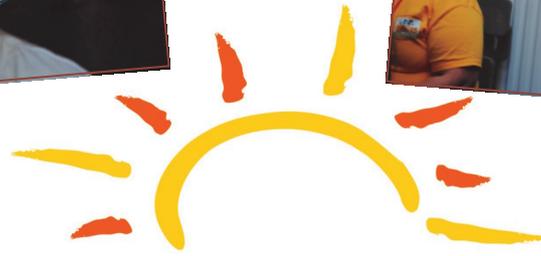
First Dromara Presbyterian Church

MAY 2019

THE LINK



**Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. Isaiah 43:19**



Summer Bible Club

1st Dromara Presbyterian



- **When?** Monday 24th—Friday 28th June
- **Age?** Children currently in Nursery to P7
- **Times?** 6.30pm—8pm
- **What?** Bible stories, games, quizzes, crafts, prizes etc
- **Theme?** To be confirmed
- **Help needed in all aspects—transport, car parking, leading, catering, praying**
- **If you think you might be able to help, speak to David or Gillian Spiers**



Meet the elder

NAME: Paul Reain

AGE: N/A. You're as young as you feel!

OCCUPATION: Digger driver/farmer

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY: Married to Judith, four boys aged 15-20—all students with part-time jobs.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN COMING TO 1ST

DROMARA?: I attended Sunday School up to the age of eight or nine and occasionally church at that stage. I later attended church in my late teens on an occasional basis.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AN ELDER?: 19 years

WHEN AND HOW DID YOU COME TO FAITH?: I made a profession of faith when I was 18. Previous to this seeds were planted in my thoughts on various occasions, eg Dick Saunders Crusade, Dromara, various missions and church services. Various Christian people were a witness to me in the way they conducted themselves—just a few to mention Elizabeth Walker, Myrtle Meeke and Marina Ball (all Sunday School teachers) and Ian McCullagh (BB).

Not unlike the Prodigal Son, the world had a draw on me and I thought I could run on my own.

I decided to go my own way—but decisions and choices have consequences, my relationship with God was cold, but He never left me nor forsook me.

No matter how much I tried to put God to the back of my mind, I couldn't.

I started to go back to church when I was 24. I knew I needed to get right with God and so a few weeks later in the quietness of my own home, I asked God to forgive me for turning my back on Him and I asked for help to live a Christian life.

The first person I told was Shaw and he gave me great encouragement, support and teaching and has been a big influence on my life then and from then on.

WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS IT MADE TO YOUR LIFE?: It has given me a whole new vision and direction in my life, also peace in my heart and hope for the future.



For me it was as big a change as turning a light on in the darkness.

A WORD OF WISDOM?:

1 ~ Two eyes to watch, two ears to listen, one mouth to speak

2 ~ A wise old owl sat on an oak, The more he saw, the less he spoke. The less he spoke, the more he heard. Why can't we be like that wise old bird!

FAVORITE HYMN OR SONG?: 'What kind of love is this'

FAVOURITE VERSE OR PASSAGE:

1 ~ Be still and know that I am God: Psalm 46:10; 2 ~ If God is for us, who can be against us.

TELL US SOMETHING WE MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU:

I played Gaelic football, long jump and high jump for an athletics club at Dublin.



Each morning we make sure and welcome everyone at the door



We have playtime....and a wee chat!



Toddlers

The First Step Toddlers Group meets every Monday morning from 10am in the hall.

If you feel you could help out with the group in any way then please speak to Judith Redmond.



Snack time is then prepared by these two lovely ladies.



Singing



It's important we say grace before our snack



We make loads of different crafts each week. This is our Easter craft...we made a card and we decorated a bun.



We always finish with song and rhythm time. Two favourites have to be sleeping bunnies and 'Jesus' love is very wonderful'



Snack time is yummy!



Operation Christmas Child 2019

By Jonathan Rodgers

Only a few months ago Darryl Nesbitt from the Samaritan's Purse came to our Café Connect evening service to share about his work overseeing Operation Christmas child in Northern Ireland. His passion to take the good news about Jesus Christ to children in need was clear for all to see. So what is Operation Christmas Child, why is it important and how can we get involved?

The Samaritan's Purse are an evangelical Christian humanitarian aid organisation which was founded just under 50 years ago. Since 1990 they have been involved in Operation Christmas Child, where shoeboxes are packed with gifts and sent to children in need across the world. Alongside the gifts, Operation Christmas Child gives children the opportunity, when possible, to hear the Gospel of Jesus through a twelve lesson course known as 'The Greatest Journey'.

In short, this course seeks to simply and clearly explain the good news about how these children can know Jesus as their Saviour through faith in Him. In its life time, Operation Christmas Child has reached over 157 million children in over 160 different countries with a tangible expression of God's love, a simple shoebox gift.

Operation Christmas Child exists to show the love of Jesus in a tangible way and to make known to children across the world the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ. In Acts 16 v 31 it says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved," but in Romans 10 v 14-15 it says, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How

beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" As Christians we believe in this life there is an eternity with God to be gained through the gift of forgiveness in His Son. But to believe in Jesus, children who are lost in sin need to hear about His perfect life, atoning death and victorious resurrection. Through Operation Christmas Child millions of children have already had this opportunity, and with our help, by God's grace, many more can. Operation Christmas Child then is an opportunity for our congregation to get involved in global mission, and help those in need, both physically and spiritually, all over the world.

Finally, what does this look like? It's simple really. As many of you have already done, by committing to filling one shoebox or more with age appropriate gifts, you can help make a real difference to not only a child's life, but their eternity. These shoeboxes have been made available at

the door in church alongside lists of gift suggestions and ideas for various age groups. Currently we plan to collect the shoeboxes in church on the week of our harvest service towards the end of the year.

For those who have already chosen to support this work, on behalf of many young children less well off than ourselves, I thank you, and if you have not yet committed to filling a shoebox gift, I would urge you to do so as these shoeboxes can be life changing for those receiving them. Additionally, if you can't support the work practically, we would ask that you would support it prayerfully as it is only by God's grace that this work can take place.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with either myself or Judith Redmond who will be only too happy to help.

Further Information is available at:

<https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/>



GOOD NEWS. GREAT JOY.



Feast

"Let's have a feast and celebrate" Luke 15v23

As the name suggests, at 'Feast' we like our food. In fact food is a massive part of our group as you will find out.

Feast was started in January this year and is aimed at young adults who are over 18, and under the age of... well we don't like to put an upper age on it. If you consider yourself a young adult then it's for you!

Scott and Lorna Moore, David and Nicola Annett along with Ashley and Alison Starrett are the organisers so please speak to any one of us for more information. We share a desire for this age group (ourselves included) to experience deeper fellowship with God and each other, and we wanted to create a group where this could happen.

We decided on the name 'Feast' as we intend to feed ourselves physically when we meet, but also spiritually as we open God's Word and learn from it together. Luke 15v22-24 speaks of the Prodigal Son and how the father threw a great feast to celebrate his return. If we are followers of God, He wants us to join His feast to celebrate what He has done for us. He wants us to encourage each other to grow in our faith, and help others discover more about His love for them. Each of us would love to see young people at 'Feast'

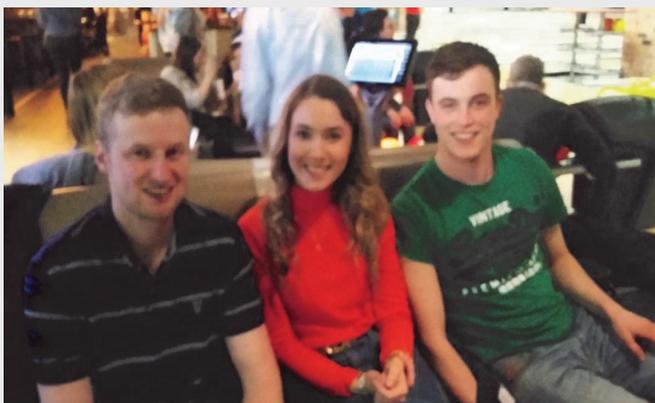
deepening their relationship with God, perhaps taking that step of trusting in Him for the first time and also building lasting friendships.

We meet on the last Saturday of each month at 7pm for food followed by a

Bible Study before finishing off with a cuppa and maybe even some more food. Did I mention we like food? Pizza and Chinese have been stroked off the list already, who knows what will be next? As well as this, we have some social nights/outings where we can go and enjoy a great night's fun together. Ian and Rose hosted our first night with a beautiful meal and games night. It was wonderful to see so many people there, the house was completely filled. Since then we have also been out for dinner at Eddie Rocket's and ten-pin bowling.

Feasting and having fun is certainly high on our agenda but above all we want to see God work in the lives of those who come along. We all need to learn how to face life with God at the centre, through whatever we may encounter on our journey. Please pray for 'Feast' as we continue to meet throughout the year.

Alison Starrett





Men's Choir

This year after identifying a gap in the local music scene we took the decision to form a men's singing group.

We appealed for singers and had an extremely positive response with over 20 men signing up to give of their talents (or at least their time).

One of the most difficult decisions faced was deciding on a name so we decided to be radical and reflect the age range of our younger members and go for Men's Choir.

We have now sung on a few occasions in church and have been warmly received by the congregation which has been greatly appreciated and has been a real encouragement.

It has been brilliant to have a good number of the younger men in the congregation sing and we hope this will continue.

We try to make a joyful noise in praising the Lord rather than trying to become choir of the year but with some talented

singers the results have been excellent.

The choir is open to any man in the congregation who likes to sing and we choose a mixture of old favourites and some more modern songs.

You do not need to be able to read music and will be made most welcome to join us. We aim to sing every couple of months as part of the worship on a Sunday morning as well as on some special occasions or by invitation.

We want to thank Robert for his patience in playing for us which has been just one more commitment to add to his list, but his patience and expertise is much appreciated.

Hopefully the men will continue to praise the Lord in this way for the year ahead and add something to the worship of the congregation with their singing.

David Annett

BB cheque

Martin from the Mourne Mountain Rescue team receiving a cheque for £500 from First Dromara Boys Brigade at their annual display. The team assisted the boys on two separate occasions last year for which they were exceptionally grateful and pass on their thanks to all involved. Martin received the cheque from Captain Ian McCullagh and Jamie Copes.





The Girls' Brigade—celebrating 60 years

We are celebrating 125 years of GBNI and 60 years of 1st Dromara Girls' Brigade this year so here's a little history for you.

The Girls' Brigade (Ireland) – 1893

Formed in Dublin in 1893 for the purpose of 'the extension of Christ's Kingdom amongst girls'. The programme was based on Bible study and physical training.

The Girls' Guildry (Scotland) – 1900

This was a church-centred organisation, founded in Scotland in 1900, providing programmes for four age groups. Its varied activities aimed at helping girls to become mature Christian women. The movement was interdenominational and international, with a strong emphasis on service to others.

The Girls' Life Brigade (England) – 1902

GLB founded in England in 1902 by the National Sunday School Union, was a

church-based international movement, with a varied programme for four age groups. Its aim was 'to help and encourage girls to become responsible, self-reliant, useful Christian women' and its motto was 'to save life'.

1965 by the amalgamation of the above three organisations.

First Dromara formed the Girls' Life Brigade in 1959 which then changed to The Girl's Brigade in 1965 after the amalgamation.

Ina Hart and Marina Ball were the inspiring Ladies behind the foundation of our Company and to them we say 'Thank You'.

Throughout GBNI this year we have been

***Remembering the past
Celebrating the present and
Inspiring the Future.***

In our company to mark these two special landmarks we held a coffee morning in November.

Can we take this opportunity to those who attended and for your generous donations. £1050 will be split between GB Funds and the GBNI School in Kisoro, Uganda.

GBNI asked each company to complete

Captains	
1959-1980	Miss Ina Hart
1980-1983	Mrs Irene McCoy
1983-1998	Mrs Anna Greer
1998-2009	Mrs Gillian Spiers
2009-	Mrs Andrea Harper

Vice- captains	
2009-2016	Mrs Dawn Johnston
2016-	Mrs Rebecca Williamson

In 1921, the first Girls' Life Brigade was founded in Northern Ireland as First Portadown Company attached to Thomas Street Methodist Church.

The Girls' Brigade - 1965

The Girls' Brigade was formed in July

a 125 Challenge and our challenge was for every GB Family to collect 125 ten pence pieces - a total of £767.10.



All money was donated to the GBNI School in Kisoro.



We were delighted when ABC Council invited us to a civic reception in Banbridge at the start of March to celebrate our 60th year. The officers, associates and brigaders attended.

To round off the year we had our annual displays. We are always delighted and encouraged to award the Brigader Brooch at the display. This year we had six girls receiving their brooches making a grand total of 96 brooches awards within the company.

A HUGE THANK YOU to all the ladies in the picture above for your continued support throughout another GB year. *If you would like to join our team please speak to Becky or myself.* And to all the girls – we hope you have enjoyed your year and that you are looking forward to September.

Andrea Harper

CAPTAIN

GB RECOMMENCES

Thursday 5th September 2019
Registration Night
7.00 – 8.00pm

Thursday 12th September 2019

Age 3 – P4	6.45 – 7.45 pm
P5 – P7	6.45 – 8.15 pm
Year 8 +	7.45 – 9.15 pm

ALL GIRLS WELCOME



Left: Rebekah Beatty, Naomi Reain, Ellen Graham, Megan Hamilton, Clara Wilson, Zoe Wright. Also included is Captain Andrea Harper and the Rev Scott Moore.



No celebration is complete without a cake and thanks to Karen Keown for the masterpiece she created. Captain Andrea Harper is pictured with Marina Ball, joint founder of the Company.



The girls at the enrolment service with officers and the Rev Scott Moore.

Travelling with God!

By Howard Bull

I suppose that compared to most, I have a very interesting job that is not only incredibly varied but takes me to many parts of the world that, under any other circumstances, I would never have an opportunity to see. Even as I write, in two days I am back to China.

Just this last twelve months alone has taken me to South Africa, the United States, New Zealand, China, Germany, France and to some of those places, multiple times. I love to travel and enjoy an adventure but, here's the biggest challenge – How do I stay in God during my trips away?

The answer to that question may seem easy but business trips are a massive upheaval in anyone's personal life. Sitting in a crowded and noisy airport lounge isn't conducive to quality personal thought or prayerful pursuit. The plane ride itself can leave few opportunities to commune quietly with our Lord. Evenings at home that would normally be set aside for leisure and family time are now spent with colleagues or customers. The company may be pleasant, but it leaves little time for Godly thoughts. When I get back to my room, I am worn out and fit for nothing but bed. Before I leave for the next day's meetings, emails need to be responded to and phone calls need to be made.

God can be forgotten in the whirlwind of our travels so, what's the solution?

Over the past three years, I have had the chance to develop some travel habits that places God four-square as my travel companion. I'm not suggesting that this in any way would suit you but it works for me.

→ The car to the airport

At four o'clock in morning, there is little on the road. There are no distractions inside or outside the car. Strangely, I do my best thinking in the car and prayer is no different. At home, if you live with family, prayers are frequently quiet or even silent. The car is a great place to pray out



as loud as you like! The beginning of the day is a great place to pray for the day ahead, to thank Him for your life, to pray for wisdom and His intervention.

The bonus of a majestic and glorious sunrise reminds me of the glory and wonder of God's creation. Nature often reveals itself in early mornings too with badgers, rabbits and foxes doing some final business before the sun comes up. I imagine Jesus sitting in the passenger seat and (don't laugh), I even make sure that there's nothing on the seat to impair His comfort. I always feel that my prayers are better focused from the car as I can concentrate more intensely and not be interrupted by people..... only God Himself is listening.

→ At the airport or ferry terminal

Although the airport is an incredibly busy place, I always have a peculiar feeling of isolation or even loneliness in those places. I have heard people speak of being lonely in a crowded room and I can now understand that. During longer periods of waiting, I take time to do some people watching. I look around at the crowds and remind myself that each one is important to God regardless of their wealth, background, religion or nationality. Could they be Christians like me? What challenges have they got in their own lives? I look at their faces, at their eyes if I

can. I can tell a great deal from their non-verbal state. Burdens frequently show in people's eyes. Happiness just as much.

I allow my attention to be drawn to someone, they may have children with them, they may look a little hassled, they may also look quite serene. I look for clues in their demeanor.

I then take a moment to turn my mind in God's direction. He's still with me. And like one friend turning to another, I say a few words to Him, silently. I ask him to bless and look after that person or that family, their children, their journey. I suppose what I am doing is what we all do, we're curious about those around us but it's good to involve God in that curiosity because it involves prayer to him.

→ All aboard

Once seated, there is always the anticipation as to who I will be sat next to for the next fifteen hours. Quite often, they will be good company and with that, will come an opportunity to discover their life stories and challenges. I am very careful that I don't intrude upon my neighbour's comfort however. This is a great opportunity to respond to their story with one of my own that subtly hints at a change that was brought about by faith in Jesus. I think that being a salesman brings about the ability to steer a con-



Above—Cape Town, below left Atlanta, USA, middle Auckland, New Zealand , right Lyon, France.



versation to a point where you can establish how they feel about God. Once that you've established their position, the conversation goes from there.

I have had some fantastic conversations with all sorts of people. I have had trips where I hardly spoke to the person beside me, to times where I was invited to a Hindu's house if ever I found myself in Philadelphia.

The most important thing is to leave your new friends knowing (or at least suspecting) of your faith and, if they have had an enjoyable flight, hopefully they will have a great impression of Christians. Sometimes you don't have to quote the Bible to preach the gospel if you know what I mean!

→ Down to business

The sole purpose of the trip is to do business. Whilst being aware of that, I also remind myself that I'm not a slave to my employer either. I will frequently travel in my own time and



everyone's entitled to fit some personal time into their schedule for any number of reasons, particularly to get a mental recharge.

The trick here is to dedicate a time of day to personal things. Keep that time precious and split it between family and God. Pause in your daily life and look around your new surroundings. What do you see that makes you glad to be alive and think of what an amazing God you have? Thank Him for those tiny, precious moments in your full day. Anything that lifts your heart or lightens the load of being apart from your family can be a perfect time to whisper a word of thanks to God who made life possible

→ Keep His Word nearby

I am afraid to admit that I am a complete slave to my smartphone. It does everything for me but best of all, holds two bibles, the KJV and the NIV. For what it's worth, I can claim that my bible is within arm's reach every minute of every day and there's not many that can claim that! If I wake up in the early hours, I just reach over and read a chapter or two. I'm at



Ephesians 4 at the moment. Having a bible in proximity when you're away from home, brings an element of familiarity and comfort. This is important when the rest of your routine has been left thousands of miles away. A bible close by helps God to take root in your heart.

→ Begin and end the day

Finally, another habit is to begin each day with prayer, praising and worshipping God for the blessings of yesterday and asking for His help with the business of the coming day. This can be done before your feet even touch the floor.

Talk to God the moment you wake up, before the world and its worries crowd your mind. Do the same thing at day's end. Finish with praise, prayer and gratitude. Thank him for his intervention and his presence and let your prayers bracket every day of your travels and even every day of your life.

Anyway, that's my little pearl of wisdom. I must run.... I have a plane to catch tomorrow!

Prayer Diary

Monday

Start off the week by praying for your family members and fellow brothers and sisters who need your prayers. We all know people who are bereaved, ill, struggling... these people need our prayers.

Tuesday

It's a blessing to meet freely to worship God. Many of our brothers and sisters around the world don't have this freedom. Pray for them by using the Open Doors World Watch List- <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution>

Wednesday

Thank God for the community of Kinallen/Dromara. Pray for Fair Hill Primary School, Kinallen Mission Hall, our surgery, the local businesses and Mother Hubbard's Playgroup.

Thursday

Thank God for the people who serve where we cannot. Thank God for our faithful missionaries. Pray for David Cowan (CEF), the Every Home Crusade

Don't forget our weekly Prayer Times
We'd love you to come along - there is no expectancy to pray out loud, just from the heart.

Congregational Prayer Time- Tuesday 8pm

Ladies' Prayer Time- Tuesday 10:30am

Elders' Prayer Time- Sunday 11:20am

Factory in Kinallen, Danny Roberts in Dromara and our own faithful PCI missionaries.

Friday

First Dromara is not an isolated congregation. Thank God and pray for our neighbouring evangelical fellowships- Dromara Reformed Presbyterian, Ballykeel Baptist and St. John's Church of Ireland.

Also remember local Presbyterian congregations that partner with us in our denomination, 2nd Dromara, Garvaghy and Drumlough Presbyterian Congregations.

Saturday

We want God to bless the work and witness of our own congregation. Every edition we have some organisation focuses- remember Tots, BB, GB, Youth Club, YF, SS, CC, Inspire and all of our church activities.

Sunday

The Psalmist reminds us, "the entrance of Thy word bringeth light." Pray that as we worship, God's Word would encourage us in our walk with Him, that God would be glorified through our worship services and that people would be drawn irresistibly to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.



"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

Philippians 1:3-5

The Gospel in Europe

Phil Dunn from European Mission Fellowship came to Café Connect last month. We have supported his work through our missionary envelopes. This is what he says about the spread of the Gospel on our continent.



MOMENTOUS CHANGE

Europe is a continent of vast ethnic and cultural diversity. It has a rich heritage in arts and science, philosophy and theology. It is a world leader in education, economics, and politics. Its wealth and standard of living attracts millions of people every year. But Europe is also the greatest mission-field in the world today! Not sure you agree?

Have a look at the facts:

- Today only 2.5% of the population in Europe is evangelical, making it the least evangelical continent in the world.

- At present there are 18 European countries with evangelical populations of just 1% or less.

- It is estimated that around 250,000 villages, towns and cities in Europe do not have a single evangelical church.

- Over 700 million European people are on their way to a lost eternity.

North and south, east and west, rich and poor, young and old: the whole of



Europe desperately needs to hear the good news of the Saviour come to save from sin.

MOMENTOUS CHALLENGE

The challenges facing the spread of the gospel in Europe are many and varied. Many churches are crippled due to a lack of Christian leadership. Many Christians are spiritually starved for want of good quality Christian resources.

Other religions such as Islam continue to grow and spread. But the single greatest challenge by far is the rapid rise of secularism. Today Europe is the most secular continent on earth. Ma-

terialism, hedonism and relativism have caused the influence of Christianity across the continent to collapse.

There is therefore a vast new mission-field for the Christian church. Over the last two thousand years Europe has been won for the gospel twice. It has also been lost twice. The great question facing the church in the twenty-first century is 'Can it be won again?'

MOMENTOUS OPPORTUNITY

For more than half a century European Missionary Fellowship (EMF) has been engaged in this new mission-field, training and supporting local Christian leaders to plant and grow gospel centred churches across Europe.

At present EMF is channeling vital support to over eighty faithful ministers and church planters who are working tirelessly in sixteen European countries. Countries as far north as Norway, as far south as Italy, as far west as London, and as far east as Belarus!

Praise God, through EMF the gospel is spreading, the church is being built and God's kingdom is advancing!

Cries from Calvary

By Rev Scott Moore

At 11:30 am on the 24th April 1916, the bugle sounded outside the Irish Citizen Army HQ in Dublin.

This blast was not the only blast to be heard across Dublin during Easter weekend 1916. This was the sound the insurrectionists were waiting for. British eyes were off Dublin and looked towards the continent. As World War I raged across Europe, now was the chance to rescue Ireland from the clutches of British Imperialist rule. Ireland was declared a Republic, 1500 men and women seized key buildings throughout the city (most famous of these was the GPO- General Post Office. Its façade still bears the bullet holes left 100 years ago) and hold these positions against thousands of British Army soldiers for almost a week. Although the British were victorious in defeating these insurrectionists, the truth is, the manner in which the British Army dealt with the rising leaders unleashed a beast for Britain that was never defeated. Although 179 buildings were destroyed and over 1350 people were killed, the British Army made martyrs out of the leaders of what became the 1916 Easter Rising. Why is this event so important in Irish history? Why will it be remembered throughout Ireland at Easter-time? The reason is that it was seen as a blood sacrifice.

Closer to home, Dromara/Kinallen will no doubt in some fashion, observe the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. Many of you will know of family members, perhaps uncles, grandparents, former neighbours who served for King and country and went over the Somme in France on 1st July 2016.

World War I lasted from 1914-1918, the first major British offensive as the French controlled the Verdun offensive, and the Battle

of the Somme is remembered in history when Britain lost the most troops in one single day, almost 60,000 men on the first day (many of which were Ulster men from Dromara, Dromore and Ballynahinch). Like the Easter Rising, miscommunication and bad organisation meant severe losses and what looked like defeat; however, the Allied soldiers brought home a victory. However, this battle will be remembered because the blood sacrifice paid for by many was not laid down in vain, but brought ultimate victory.

Although, there will be historical, political and even religious attitudes which will mean that most people will commemorate one and disregard the other, however, no one can doubt, both events, focusing on blood sacrifice, will be remembered before and after the Easter period.

However, as we approach Easter and in a small series of seven articles, I wish to look at the most solemn event in the history of the world. It is a blood sacrifice, offered not just for any political persuasion, or for any particular ethnic group, but offered for all of God's people! Seven times as the Saviour of the World hung on the cruel cross, he spoke. These are not seven anecdotes or seven whimsical sayings, these are seven, painful, heartfelt, soul-searching, rasping, comforting words, of a man whose lungs are about to collapse, whose hands and nails are nailed and whose lips are parched in the heat of the Middle Eastern sun. In fact, we call them the seven final sayings from the cross. In reality, in the Aramaic language which the Lord Jesus spoke, these were basically seven utterances, two of the seven being only one word and the longest of the seven being only 10 words.

We begin by looking at the first of these sev-

en sayings, and the reality is, this first statement is a prayer which must have been answered by Almighty God, because it's the reason you are here! Yes, it's the reason why you are reading this article. Let's observe three great truths, we see mercy, we have a challenge and we have an answer from this one sentence...

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Mercy!

The Lord Jesus Christ had been whipped, scourged, beaten, bruised, rejected, criticised, denied, condemned, betrayed, spat upon, he had his hands and feet nailed, he had his head crowned with thorns, he had his clothes ripped off and gambled for, he had his side pierced... yet he remained silent! What is the first thing you would expect a man in this position to say? What is the first thing you would say after this ordeal? The maker of Heaven and Earth (Colossians 1:16) now hangs between Heaven and Earth and two common criminals and he says "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The most interesting thing about it is that this is a prayer! Robert Murray McCheyne once said "a man is what he is on his knees before God, and nothing more." What a wonderful prayer! No bitterness! We see love! We see mercy! We see tremendous mercy!

Was this a one off? Actually, the Greek word in the New Testament "said" is not just Jesus spoke, but that he kept on speaking! In other words, Jesus kept saying, again and again and again, over and over again, continually, "Father, forgive them." It gives the impression that the Lord Jesus is pleading with his Father time and again for the people who are

putting Him to death. This is surely forgiveness, love and mercy at its highest!

Charles Wesley, author of many of the great hymns of the faith, once said of Isaac Watt's 'When I survey the wondrous cross' that he would've given up all the hymns he'd ever written to have been able to have penned it... Watt's words depict well the scene we see here at the cross.

*See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down,
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

This is not a spontaneous prayer. This prayer was planned in eternity past, for you! Isaiah 53:12 says "yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." Jesus' prayer for the cantankerous crowd, the shameful soldiers, the malicious mob, and the immoral instigators of his own crucifixion says "they do not know what they do." Such is the mercy that the Lord Jesus Christ is lavishing on his perpetrators.

What does this mean for you and for me? Obviously 103 years after the Battle of the Somme, allied victory in 1918 means we are not under Imperial German control. The martyred deaths after the Dublin Easter Rising of James Connolly, Patrick Pearse and the other insurrectionists in 1916 gave many a martyred cause worth fighting. After all, Pearse himself said in 1915 during a famous funeral oration "Ireland unfree shall never be at peace." What does this Mercy, prayed for by the Lord Jesus Christ, mean for us?

It means that no one is too sinful for His forgiveness! Yes, no matter who you are, no matter what sinful, shameful deeds you have committed in the past, no one is beyond the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ wants to offer forgiveness to you today! However, the sad thing is this, most of the time it's not people who think they're too bad that reject Christ's offer of mercy, but the opposite.

Most people who read this short study will think (if they're not already trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ) that they are too good, and not needing of mercy. Perhaps you think, I don't need the same mercy being offered to the crowd, or the bystanders, or the soldiers or the leaders, but the reality is, you do, because you were there! The very real fact is, you, as well as I, put Jesus Christ to death on

the cross. He died for ALL the sins of His people. There were no spectators at Calvary, for everyone was and is, involved! The hymn writer says "were you there when they crucified my Lord?" The answer is YES! Every person was there! We all need this Mercy, which is freely offered, and it's offered now!

Challenge!

This one sentence, offered from the parched lips of the dying Saviour is a challenge to us all! It's not just the unsaved person that needs to take heed of these words. This is pardon, this forgiveness, this mercy is everyone's greatest need, it's not our mortgage repayments, it's not our children's education, it's not our career prospects, it's not our bank balance or our hobbies and interests (though important some of these things are).

As Christians, what are some of the challenges to our daily walk with the Lord that we see here:

1. Pray- Oftentimes we think we are only good to the church if we can go and serve. Here we see the Lord Jesus with his hands and feet both nailed to the cross. He is unable to go! He is unable to move, even with his hands tied, and unable to clasp them into a praying position, he can still pray to the Father. Maybe you think you're too old to be involved in the church. This is not so, please pray (you can find out how to pray in a more informed way by reading this magazine), young people, do you pray? We see many prayer meetings void of young people. Just because you are fit and able to go and serve does not mean that you can leave the ground work of praying to some of the more senior people. You are always welcome to come to our Tuesday prayer meetings, too.

2. Forgive- It's amazing how much bitterness, envy, jealousy and malice are present in the church of Jesus Christ (by this I mean not just in Dromara, but in the universal Christian Church). In this example of our Lord, we see Him throw off all resentment and he pleads for forgiveness. Is there someone in our church who you hate or you harbour ill feelings for, perhaps it's time for you, to pray like the Lord Jesus, and forgive them.

3. Obey- Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do." However, this is not true of you reading this. If you read this and you are still outside of Jesus Christ, then you are willfully disobeying God. This is a dangerous position to be in. The

outstretched hand is offered to you, obey.

4. Love- Does this not make you want to delight more in the Lord Jesus Christ! Has your love for the Lord grown cold? Have you forgotten what it's like to spend time with the Lord? These words, "Father forgive, for they do not know what they do" just drive us to love and worship more! It should encourage us to love more, love God and love others!

Answer!

Thirdly, and finally, we see an answer. This was a prayer, offered up by the Lord Jesus Christ, but the question you might well ask is, was it answered? We know God answers every prayer, but his answer can be yes, no or wait! Was this spluttered prayer, cried out in excruciating pain answered?

Why don't you answer this for yourselves? Surely every person who was saved directly after the crucifixion was an answer to this prayer. If I were to tell you that as soon as verse 47, only 13 verses after this cry, the crucifying centurion looked at the limp lifeless body of the Saviour and was able to praise God and say "Certainly this man was innocent!" What about 50 days later, on the day of Pentecost, the early chapters of the book of Acts tells us that when Peter preached Christ 3000 believed and were saved! Here are thousands of examples, surely, of how this prayer was answered.

This prayer is not a blanket covering for all sin! Jesus is basically praying, please don't judge them now! Please Lord, give them time! This is why at the start of this study I said this prayer is the reason you are reading this. Jesus prayed that the day of judgement would not be then, but later, giving people one last opportunity to repent and believe. Don't let that opportunity pass! Jesus' prayer was answered and I hope that this prayer will be your prayer, too!

Please do not forget the most solemn blood sacrifice in the history of the world; don't forget the mercy, the challenge or the answer. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."



“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling



their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-47

Announcements and dates for your diary

Saturday 4th May: 10am- 1pm- Coffee Morning for those going abroad on Summer Outreach. All welcome!

Sunday 5th May: 11.30am- Welcoming of new members day, prior to Communion.

Sunday 12th May: 11.30am- The sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Tuesday 14th May: Sunday 19th May- Rev. Moore will be on compulsory Post -Ordination Training. We welcome the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Patterson (Minister Emeritus Castledawson and Curran P.C.) to conduct worship. Emergency pastoral cover supplied by the Rev. Kenny Hanna.

Wednesday 15th May- Saturday 18th May:

Our Presbytery will have an Outreach Stall at the Balmoral Show. Please pop by!

Tuesday 21st May 8pm: First Meeting of the newly elected Congregational Committee.

Sunday 26th May: 11.30am- Youth Day! The service will be led by members of the Youth Fellowship.

Saturday, 8th June: 4.30pm-7pm Sunday School family bar-



becue at Mullartown House, Annalong—open to everyone in the congregation.

Sunday 9th June: 11:30am- Children's Day!

The service will be led by members of the Sunday School.

Sunday 23rd June: 11.30am- Commissioning Service for all involved in Summer Outreach (Home and Abroad)- please let the Rev. Moore know of your plans so you can be included.

Monday 24th- Friday 28th June: Holiday Bible Club. Please see separate announcement in this magazine.

Thursday 27th June- Wednesday 10th July: Services and Pastoral Cover will be supplied by the Rev. A. Shaw Thompson (Minister Emeritus) when the Rev. Moore is in Romania.