

11th March 2021

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter to you it is one year today since the World Health Organisation declared the Covid 19 crisis a pandemic. It is also almost one year since ladies in both churches met to worship at our special *PW* services. We were uncertain about what would happen next, but I don't think any of us could have foreseen the long-term effect of this crisis and that now in 2021 we would be still apart. How precious now are our memories of times shared together worshipping, learning and growing as Christ's followers. We miss the chat, the mug of coffee in the church kitchen and the catch up on how friends or family are doing. We pray that soon we will be able to share in this again and perhaps we will not take simple God given gifts of friendship and fellowship as lightly as we did before. In our church fellowship we have always been so busy doing things that it has been a challenge for us to, *'Be still and know that I am God'*, Psalm 46:10.

The intervening year has been difficult and challenging for many of you. There has been illness, bereavement and the difficulty of getting treatments and medical advice in an overstretched NHS. Everyone has found it difficult not to be able to help and support others in our church fellowship in the normal way. I send to you all my prayers for whatever difficulties you have faced or with which you continue to struggle, praying that God will give you the strength you need to face each day in his care. Zephaniah 3:5 says *'... every new day He does not fail'*.

As I write I urge you to follow our theme *'Side by Side'* which has now been extended into 2021/22. It is based on 1 Thessalonians 5:11 *'encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing'*. We have all benefitted from a phone call, card or text message from another church member. Please consider prayerfully someone who may benefit from your care. As time goes on it is easy to become immune to the needs to others.



Revelation 4:11 says, *'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being'*. How wonderful to see the signs of Spring all around us. The daffodils have always been a particular favourite of mine, as over the years many were planted on the farm where I grew up at Ballynahinch. Just this week my sister sent me a photograph of the daffodils on the sides of the lower part of the lane, as

I have missed seeing them this year. The County Down daffodils are ahead of my County Antrim ones. As in every year so far, one side of the lane has a line of daffodils yellow and fluttering in the breeze but the other side is a bit sad. Because of the hedge it doesn't get as much sun, so the daffodils don't thrive well, even though they still try every year. It reminds me that, unless we are rooted, grounded and growing in the light of God's son, we too could be sad and unfulfilled in this world. I pray that we may all take every opportunity at this time to reflect, to look again this Easter with fresh vision at Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross and strengthen our relationship with Christ our strength and our redeemer. May we praise him in our kitchens, our workplace or wherever we find ourselves each day.

If I tried to live for you Lord today,
If I tried to follow your wonderful way,
Then all of my life would be me and not you
And none of your glory would ever shine through.

Since I first met you I knew Lord you were the way
I tried hard to walk in your footsteps each day
But somehow my life did not glorify thee,
So make me a channel, and you live through me.

Take each new day, whatever's in store
Take my whole being – and into me pour
Your power and your spirit, - oh make me anew
For no-one can change me, Lord Jesus but you.

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Heavenly Father our creator, you are the maker of days and times and seasons. We pray that you will help us to grow and mature in our faith as we begin each new day. We remember our sisters in Christ whom we love. Be with each one in the circumstances they face each day. Thank you that your great love and faithfulness is shown to us especially in the gift and sacrifice of your son Jesus for us. Amen.

