

# MC CRACKEN CHURCH

## Easter 2021

Northern Ireland Charity Number NIC104215



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# LETTER FROM BARRY



**With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God.'**

As I've spoken to many of you over the past weeks there's a little phrase that I've heard often, "I'm just fed up." It's a sentiment I think we've all shared through the long months of January and February at the end of a long and difficult year.

However deep the darkness of the past year, the approach of Easter reminds us that God has never been distant but, that in his Son Jesus, he has revealed his true nature by suffering with us and for us on that darkest day in history which we call Good Friday. When we ask the question, where is God in this, we need look no further than the cross and see him purposefully choosing to be there in that place of suffering for us.

This past year has been a one of darkness, grief and loss experienced by so many. But I'm pleased to be able to pass on to you some news that will I think offer you a little bit of hope.

In line with the most recent advice from the Stormont Executive and PCI our Kirk Session have decided to resume our services in church, in time for Easter Sunday. Easter Sunday, the day of the resurrection of Jesus our Saviour, the most significant day in our Christian calendar. Easter Sunday was so significant for the first Christians, that they eventually set Sunday as their new day to meet together in worship of the Risen Lord. A day when death was conquered and eternal life offered in Christ to all. A day of new beginnings and of glorious hope.

I hope you'll be able to join us in coming weeks as we worship back in church again. As was the case back last September, I want to emphasise again that it may not be the time yet for everyone to come back to gathered worship and no one will be judged for choosing instead to continue to worship from home. Pre-recorded audio podcasts of the service will continue to be provided each Sunday through the links sent by email and by our dial-up service (028 94331906). We'll also endeavour to provide a video of the service in church which will appear on our website on the same Sunday afternoon.

You'll also soon find on our church website a video meditation to guide us through Holy Week. This has been prepared by the ministers in the South Belfast Presbytery and the format allows you to play it one section at a time over the five days to Good Friday.

May I wish you all a very happy Easter full of the hope of the resurrection.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Crow". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.



MCCRACKEN MEMORIAL

# Easter Sunday Service

This is to let you know that Sunday Services will be resuming in the church on Sunday 4th April at 11am.

If you wish to attend it is important that your place is booked beforehand and by Wednesday 31st March 2021 at the latest. It may not be possible to accommodate anyone who requests a seat after this date.

Please email our Clerk of Session Rosemary Simpson email address [rosemaryecs@btinternet.com](mailto:rosemaryecs@btinternet.com) or telephone her on 028 9082 7017 or 07713 755646 to book your place, please leave a message if there is no reply. Your booking will be confirmed.

Please indicate how many people will be in your group so that seating can be planned accordingly. All the same precautions, social distancing and hygiene arrangements will be in place as when we last met in church.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our Easter Sunday Service.

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## MESSAGE FROM PCI

*The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) encourages all of its members to actively consider receiving vaccination against Covid-19 when it is offered to them. While recognising that this is ultimately a matter of personal judgment, PCI neither discourages its members from taking up the vaccine offer nor is it supportive of those who seek to discourage the take-up of the vaccine.*



Prayer Change Things!

# APRIL PRAYER POINTS

On this Easter Sunday give thanks to God for the hope that this day brings.

Pray for someone you know this week who desperately needs that Christian hope in their lives.

As God reveals afresh his love for you, ask how you might reveal his amazing sacrificing love to others.

## WEEK BEGINNING 4TH APRIL

Pray this week for our MLA's in Stormont as they continue to work through very difficult and contentious issues in relation to abortion, devolution, and Brexit, not to mention the challenge of setting a path for us out of lockdown.

## WEEK BEGINNING 18TH APRIL

Pray for children going back to school tomorrow for the first time.

Ask God to help them not to be anxious, but to enjoy this week the company of others again and catching up on lost time in the classroom.

Pray for teachers too having to assess pupils and award grades this year again.

## WEEK BEGINNING 11TH APRIL

Pray for Storehouse as they continue to provide help to people in need through door to door deliveries of groceries. Thank God for how this has been able to develop with the support of local churches allowing a greater range of foods and fresh produce to be included in the bags. Pray for the Storehouse Staff to be able to adapt to the changing needs in the coming months.

## WEEK BEGINNING 25TH APRIL



Prayer Change Things!

# MAY PRAYER POINTS

Pray for Taughmonagh Presbyterian Church congregation this week and their minister, Rev Robert Love.

Ask God to help and bless them as they begin to meet together again.

Pray for renewed interest from the wider community and for new connections to be made.

## WEEK BEGINNING 2ND MAY

Thank God for continued easing of restrictions allowing businesses to reopen. Pray that business, trade and commerce will pick up again, and especially that our High Streets, and town centres might be restored.

Pray that as things return to normal job opportunities will open up again.

## WEEK BEGINNING 9TH MAY

Pray this week for the Cowan family and their work in Kenya. Ask God to protect the Cowan's rural community around Tuum from COVID. Pray for the continued Christian witness through the teaching programme at the girls secondary school. Ask God that these pupils will be equipped and empowered to be movers and shakers in their communities and families, of good character, strong in their faith in Christ, and steadfast in their love for him.

## WEEK BEGINNING 16TH MAY

On this Pentecost Sunday ask God for a fresh outpouring of his Spirit across our land, and throughout our world. As the pandemic has exposed our human fragility and the emptiness of secular materialism pray for a new spiritual awakening. Just as has he has done in many times and places in the past, let's ask God to do this in our day.

## WEEK BEGINNING 23RD MAY

The church would normally be preparing at this time for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Ask God that plans for an Assembly later in the Autumn will progress well and that the church might be able to safely hold a full meeting of its General Assembly. Pray for all the staff in Assembly Buildings as some adjust back to working in the offices again.

## WEEK BEGINNING 30TH MAY

# MEET AN ELDER



## TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF.

Home was a townland called Goshaden, approximately 5 miles outside Derry near the infamous 'Burntollet Bridge'. My father, Willie, was a General Merchant and Sub Post Master. He had a rich baritone voice and was choirmaster at Cumber Presbyterian Church. My mother, Annie, was a Primary School teacher and church organist. I am the youngest of 4 siblings and mum taught us all at Killymallaght Primary School. I started Foyle College in 1952. Unfortunately my mum died during my first year and left a great void. Life around the shop and 30 acres of land which bordered the river Faughan, was very enjoyable, especially with my dog, a Collie called Randy (named after

the boxer Randolph Turpin). After Foyle in 1960 I moved to Belfast to work in the Foreign Department of the Belfast Banking Co. Ltd. I stayed in the Presbyterian Hostel in Howard Street where I established many friendships and attended Fitzroy Presbyterian Church. I joined North of Ireland Rugby Club (and played scrumhalf to the great Mike Gibson), played tennis at the Belfast Boat Club and also joined the Belfast Philharmonic Society in 1972 where I was a member for 28 years. Life was busy. Bea and I were married in Ulsterville Pres. Church in 1966. Karen was born in 1969 and Linda in 1971.

## WHAT ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY IN FAITH.

I know that God has always been with me and that was established in my young days when we attended Cumber Presbyterian Church every Sunday as a family. I studied the Shorter Catechism and Bible in Sunday School and sang in the church choir where my Uncle Albert (Allen) taught me many of the tenor parts. I was happy in the choir, singing praises to God and found solace there. The Rev. A G M Drummond was influential in establishing my faith and belief in God. In 1972 the family joined McCracken where I became a member of the choir and later was appointed a member of the Church Committee. I was subsequently ordained as an Elder and, as such, encouraged to concentrate much more on the Christian ethos. Ministers can have a great influence and I have been lucky with mine but I would like to mention the Rev. Fiona Forbes whose ministry really strengthened my faith as a Christian.

## WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE HYMN?

Psalm 100 (2nd version, tune: Glasgow) 'O all ye lands, unto the Lord, make ye a joyful noise' (A fond memory of my Cumber days). Hymn: Be still my soul (Finlandia) – a comforting message: 'your God will undertake to guide the future as he has the past'. Hymn: How Great Thou Art - extolling God's work. 'O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder, consider all the works Thy hand hath made'

## ANY FAVOURITE BIBLE PASSAGE??

Acts Chapter 9: v 1-19. Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus. It shows the power of the Lord.

## TELL ME SOMETHING THE CONGREGATION DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU. ANY SECRETS OR GUILTY PLEASURES?

Apparently none – according to my wife I'm just perfect!!!!

# DID YOU KNOW?

## An update from Stephen and Angelina Cowan, PCI Mission Workers based in Tuum, Kenya

For a number of years money from the McCracken Outreach Account has helped pay towards the cost of providing Secondary level schooling for a number of girls in Seren.

Our energy levels were challenged as we tried to keep up with normal activities during the recent hot dusty weather.

Last week we had a visiting team of four, including the Moderator, from Laikipia Presbytery which has oversight for work here. This Presbytery, which stretches from Nyahururu includes several counties including the entire Samburu county. Unfortunately, it is not well resourced and this area has often been neglected. As they have no suitable vehicle for driving within the local terrain I (Stephen) went to Maralal and picked them up. After visiting Tuum, I took them to all the places where small numbers gather for Christian worship.



Photo: Presbytery Visit

They were able to see the importance of the Samburu Awareness and Action Programme in ministry and the need to have more integration and understanding of cultural aspects for church ministers posted to this area. It made them more aware of the importance of keeping trust with the community. It showed them the relevance of work such as repairing water sources and improving milk production at the same time as teaching the gospel and sharing the life of Jesus while helping people cope with the burden of change.

The outreach, following our teaching time last month in Seren saw many people challenged by the need to seek forgiveness. The evening meetings revealed an increased interest in the spiritual truth of Jesus Christ. By improving the water supply-line to the school and community, people understood our commitment to continue improving their living conditions and our caring concern about their daily difficulties.

The past few days have shown the sad reality of cattle rustling when seven people were shot dead (attackers and victims). This was due to Samburu attacking a Turkana village near Lake Turkana. Sadly, the Turkana when trying to recover their goats shot dead two innocent people who were driving along the road. Encouraging change as in cattle rustling, is difficult as the covenants of the past are still very strong.



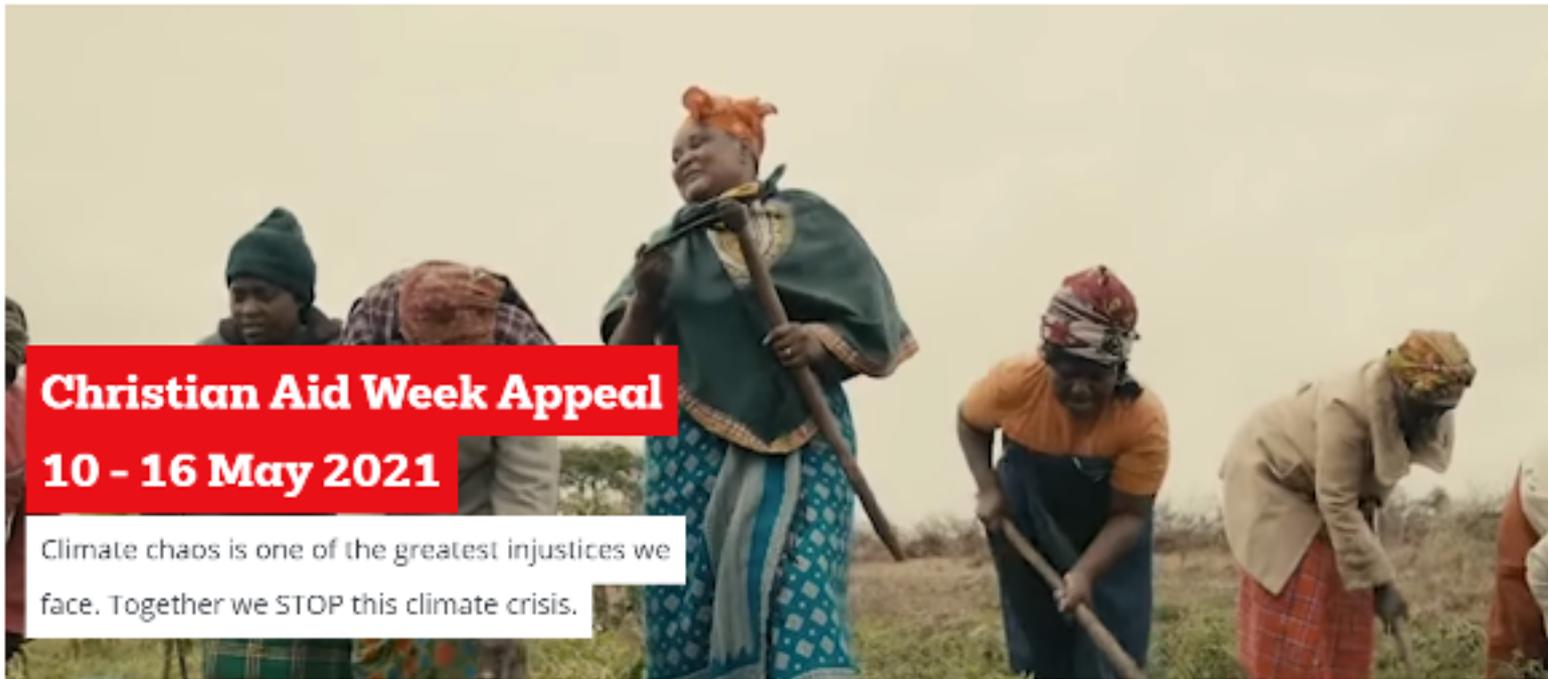
**GLOBAL DISCIPLES**  
*Go Deep Go Wide*

**MARCH 2021**

### Prayer points

- Pray for a shared understanding of resources and the realisation that sin is the root cause of conflict.
- Give thanks for an encouraging Presbytery visit and the hope for vision and change in ministry approach.
- Continue to pray for the positive impact of the girls' secondary school and also the 'safe place' at Seren.

# CHRISTIAN AID WEEK



Droughts are now more frequent and more intense due to the climate crisis. Rose and her family, and millions of people in Kenya, are struggling to get enough food and water.

Your gift could help a community build an earth dam, so when the rains do come, they will have the water they need to live. People like Rose need every last drop to survive the drought.

Your gifts could help communities build better earth dams to harvest more water; sow drought-tolerant crops that grow even with the fewest of drops; or set up an advocacy group to demand change at the highest level and put a stop to this climate crisis.

**Together we STOP this climate crisis.**

Every envelope. Every gift. Every challenge can change lives.

## Rose's Story

Rose is caught in a cycle of climate chaos. From severe drought to flooding, extreme weather robs her of what she needs to survive: a reliable source of water.

When she was a child, Rose remembers how often the rains would fall, giving fruit to the baobab trees and providing plenty of nutritious food to eat. 'When I was a young girl, there was plenty of food,' Rose says.

Now, the rains are totally unreliable. The climate crisis has galvanised extreme weather and Rose's community are feeling the brunt of it. For months at a time, Rose and her family lives with drought.

Rose strives to provide for her grandchildren who live with her. She does all she can to give them happy childhoods, like the times she remembers when there was plenty of

food. But the climate crisis is driving her to the brink.

In times of drought, Rose sets out on a long and dangerous journey every morning to collect water for her family. She walks on an empty stomach.

'Because I am old, I can't walk very fast. When I get home I just rest in the evening. I have no energy to do anything else,' Rose says.

Even when the rains do come, relief for Rose is often short lived.

There is a nearby earth dam just minutes away from Rose's home. It should be a lifeline. But it's not wide enough or deep enough for everyone's needs. It runs out of water too quickly.

Imagine how dispirited Rose must feel watching the rain fall for days, only to find the dam empty just a short while

later.

What's more, the rains are much heavier than they should be, putting Rose's community at risk of flooding.

Rose is over 60 years old and simply won't have the strength to fetch water from further afield for much longer. We need to fight this climate crisis together.

With a reliable source of water, people like Rose would be free from long, painful journeys. They would be able to grow fresh vegetables to eat. And they would be able to protect themselves from the dangers of coronavirus. With such dire need, every last drop of water that falls in Rose's community is precious.

**People like Rose need every last drop to survive this climate crisis. Your gifts will help ensure they can.**



**"I believe God gives me strength and helps me persevere. I pray that God will help people to help me."**

**Rose Rose Katanu Jonathan**

*Kate Moscato and her team*

# **WALK A MARATHON**

**for MacMillan Cancer Support**

*I am part of the Lagan Currach's and instead of rowing up and down the lagan we have decided to get our boots on and Walk a marathon for MacMillan Cancer Support. Lisa and Iain McKinney, who many of you know, are also part of this group. We have started our training, out walking in all weather, and trying to extend our distance each time. I have never walked this far or anything like it in my life so it will certainly be challenge, however walking along the beautiful North Coast and knowing its for such a good cause is my motivation. If you would like to donate there is a link to a just fundraising page or if you pop it in envelope and post through my letterbox or in church with details for what it is, I would be so grateful. Each of us needs to raise at least £250 but I would love to be able to exceed this. Thanks for all your support,  
Kate Moscato*



In support of

**WE ARE  
MACMILLAN.  
CANCER SUPPORT**



**CAUSEWAY 2021**

nt's Causeway, taking in the drama



**MIGHTY**

**HIKES**

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<https://www.justgiving.com/team/LaganCurrachsWalkingCrew>

