

## EDITORIAL

# FOCUS

## The magazine of Whitehead Congregational Church

June 2010

Vol.13. No 2



**Minister.**

**Rev. Dr Victor H. Ryan M.A., Ph.D.**

**Sunday services**

**11.30am**

**7.00pm**

Sunday School and Crèche during morning worship

Church Telephone 028 93373693

Dear friends,

Greetings and good wishes as we publish our June (July) 2010 issue of "Focus".

We had a reasonable attendance at our AGM this year, but once again down from last year. For those who did not attend are concise reports for you to browse at in the Jottings section.

We had a brilliant evening on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2010 were Cameron Moore gave an excellent film show and talk on the 'Wild life around County Antrim' It was well attended and after a few technical hiccups I got it up and running with the assistance from Cameron's daughters Joanne and Jenny (It worked alright the afternoon before when I tried it). The film gave an excellent insight of the birds and animals that inhabit our fields, rivers and coastline some of which can be seen in our back gardens. Cameron has generously donated DVD copies of his production and to date this has raised a grand total of £217.50 in aid of the Building Fund. At one point Cameron could not supply enough due to the demand. So thank you Cameron. If you wish to obtain a copy please contact Cameron or myself.

And talking of the Building fund I would like to thank all who have contributed. We could not receive any grants from the Environment and Heritage office as we are not a listed building so all monies to repair the roof is funded by the congregation. Those attend church get a regular update of the fund. Could I remind those who do not attend church on a regular basis that they can still donate to the Building fund by passing any contributions to the minister when he calls or by giving your donation to another member of the congregation who will leave it with the treasurer.

I'm sorry for the thin edition of this issue of 'FOCUS' but I have had a few technical problems with the computer and can't retrieve some photos that I would have liked to have published.

Bye for now

*David Stevenson*

## **Points from the pulpit**

### **“I am the resurrection and the Life”**

*John 11 verse 25.*

Since the March issue of our Church magazine ‘FOCUS’, Easter has come and gone. Now we are looking forward to the summer and the good weather!

For many the religious significance of Christ’s resurrection means little or nothing, but I feel that for us here within the family of Christ’s people in Whitehead Congregational Church, must ask ourselves seriously the question,

“What does the message of Easter mean to me, personally?” obviously such a question cannot be answered in a word or in a thousand words. However to guide us in our thinking, as your friend and minister, in seeking to make reply I would suggest firstly,

#### I

### **The cross means light – light for our minds.**

So often the experiences of daily life bring discouragement on every hand. In nature there is a constant delay, disintegration, death, as the poet puts it, “nature red in tooth and claw”. Along our earthly pilgrimage we come face to face with sorrow, suffering, tragedy, heartache and heartbreak. A loved one dies of cancer, a splendid.

A young man with a brilliant career, in front of him, paralysed for life in an accident on the rugby field. The innocent child of a most loyal and devoted church family is killed in a car crash. Our minds are confused and bewildered by happenings such as these. In our distraught souls, amid the agony of our hearts we cry out for an explanation. Only the echo of our unanswered cries return to us all the reasoning, all our inquiring leaves us seemly in darkness. Is there no light for our minds?

It is here at the very point that out of that impenetrable blackness there comes the message of the cross. Here at last is light for our minds. At Calvary’s cross we see the heart of God laid bare, and that the heart reveals itself as the heart of all embracing love through self sacrifice. All is not sorrow, all is not suffering, all is not death.

Calvary is not defeat but victory. Christ’s God’s only begotten Son, has brought light out of darkness.

*Cont*

An old highland fisherman was reading aloud the fifteenth chapter of Mark’s Gospel making the words live with the emotion in his voice, “Save thyself”; he read, “And come down from the cross.”

“But o man of my heart”, he cried, “You didn’t come down, you were too good of a soldier for that. You fought it out to the last.”

There was a man who saw the light from the victorious cross. For the self-sacrifice of the Saviour leads us to the light of his resurrection victory. He had changed the blackness of Calvary into the brightness of the resurrection morning-

Therefore let us pray

In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o’er the wrecks of time  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

Secondly I would suggest

#### II

### **The cross means love – love of our hearts**

Jesus bridged the gap between Heaven and Earth. He brought God down to us and made us know God as our loving heavenly Father. Nothing so vividly reveals the love of God for us as Jesus sacrificial death upon the cross.

As we stand looking in the Saviour’s eyes as he dies, we understand from that moment that his death is not only for the multitude of men, women and young people, but for each one of us personally. The cross shows us the extent of that love, the height of it, the depth of it, the width of it, it is intensely personal. Yet it is more than personal. It is transforming, redeeming.

In the novel, ‘Children of the ghetto’, the lovely Jewess, Rebecca, is tempted to forsake the path of right.

Her lover promises comfort and luxury, and a thousand dazzling pleasures. She resolves to run away with him. Her cases are packed, the house is silent. The taxi is waiting at the front door, Suddenly a light engulfed her. She sees her father’s face uplifted in love and earnest prayer, and then she gives her final decision –

“I may not go”, she cried to her lover. “I dare not go, I will not go. Good-bye.”

*Cont*

When we look into the face of Christ our hearts are touched by that forgiving redeeming love of our Saviour and friend.

In this space age with scientists probing deeper and deeper into the vastness of the universe, we all at times ask ourselves, are we just a dot, a cosmic speck of dust hurling through space without purpose, without meaning? My friends, the cross of Christ says otherwise. The all embracing love of God enters our lives personally as we stand by that central cross, accepting Christ in faith. This love of God is ours for ever and ever. It is a redeeming love with power to forgive and lift us above our sinful natures. We do not understand all that happened at the cross, but we do know that Christ's cross has brought God's personal forgiving and redeeming love to us.

Calvary is not defeat but victory. Christ's God's only begotten Son has brought love out of despair. Let us each one yield ourselves to that love.

I know not how that Calvary's cross  
A world from sin could free  
I only know its matchless love  
Has brought god's love to me.

Finally I would suggest,

### III

#### **The cross means life – life for our souls.**

I cling to the cross as a drowning man clasps a life-belt. For if the cross of Christ is taken out of my life – your life, my life – all our lives would sink into nothingness. When the road is rocky and rough and things go wrong, I must anchor myself to this cross for it is the symbol of new life, of renewed life, abundant life for you and me, for us all.

If we lose our grip upon the cross of Christ, we lose our grip upon that way of life which is the only real and living way for true life. – for the cross means the beginning of life eternal here and now.

From the second world war comes the dramatic incident when an American warship has been torpedoed by the Japanese. The torpedo had penetrated the side of the ship but failed to explode, it had to be made harmless. Two young ratings crawled in beside that deadly piece of evil. Piece by piece they remove the steel plating around the warhead of the torpedo, revealing the deadly mechanism. Once, twice, they attempt to remove it but each time it slips back.

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A third time they tried and with great calmness and courage, as one of them raised the exploding device, the other in a flash inserted a paper card, jamming the needle, leaving the torpedo harmless, its sting drawn.

My friends we are all aware that part of life is death –physical death, but the sting of death is drawn – the cross of Christ has seen to that.

“O death where is thy sting, O grave were is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”

We are inheritors of the everlasting. The message of the victorious cross ensures us that all we are in possession of that quality of life which will never end. Because Jesus lives we too shall live for ever and ever. Calvary is not defeat but victory. Christ's God's only begotten Son, has brought life out of death.

Therefore in the joy of all the light and love and life revealed by the cross of Christ to our minds and hearts and souls, let us daily strive to serve our saviour, praying as we do so,

I know not how at Joseph's tomb  
Could solve death's mystery  
I only know a living Christ  
Our immortality.

With kindest regards  
Your sincere friend and Minister

*Victor Ryan.*

#### **The path to success.**

The path to success isn't easy  
The path to success isn't straight  
We have to jump a few puddles  
We may need to clamber a gate  
But if we keep doggedly trying  
And refuse to give up or turn around  
Why then, our endeavour's rewarded  
And at last journey's end will be found.

## Prayer Corner

### A Prayer from The Heart.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you that you have surrounded me with your love. Thank you for both the good and the bad times I have experienced, the bad times have certainly taught me things I probably would not have learned otherwise. The good times make trusting you so much easier. Thank you for the gifts and talents you have blest me with. Help me acknowledge and use them to honour you.

Thank you for sending your only son to die in my place, to take my blame. This gift is so undeserved. I am amazed at your awesome grace. Help me live by faith in the assurance that this grace is mine.

It feels good to stop and spend time thanking you for all our blessings. Lord please receive my humble attempt at thanksgiving.

Amen.

**“Give thanks to the lord, call on his name; make known His deeds among the people”.**

*1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 16 : 8.*

### Flower List May - June 2010

#### **July**

4<sup>th</sup> Helen Hope  
11<sup>th</sup> Ann Miller  
18<sup>th</sup> M. Cameron  
25<sup>th</sup> Irene Thompson

#### **August**

1<sup>st</sup>  
8<sup>th</sup> Helen Hope  
15<sup>th</sup>  
25<sup>th</sup> G. Gordon

#### **September**

5<sup>th</sup> Jean Hermin  
12<sup>th</sup> Marilyn McGrady  
19<sup>th</sup> Linda Stevenson  
26<sup>th</sup> Helen Hope

#### **October**

3<sup>rd</sup> Thea Wilson  
10<sup>th</sup> Mrs Ryan  
17<sup>th</sup> Harvest  
27<sup>th</sup> June and Muriel  
31<sup>st</sup> Jim Sheldon

If any member of the congregation would be interested in gifting flowers to the church there are still some dates throughout the year available and would be gratefully appreciated.

## **PLANNING AHEAD**

Sunday Services

July 2010 – September 2010

All services conducted by Rev. Dr. Victor H. Ryan.  
Unless otherwise stated.

<b>July</b>	4	11.30am	The Face of Christ <b>Communion</b>
	11	11.30am	The hinges of history
	18	11.30am	‘Do it yourself’
	25	11.30am	Moses and the burning bush
<b>August</b>	1	11.30am	The victory of Calvary <b>Communion</b>
	8	11.30am	<b>Andrew Hamill</b>
	18	11.30am	<b>Rev. John Mann</b>
	25	11.30am	<b>Rev. Maynard Cathcart</b>
	29 <sup>th</sup>	11.30am	<b>Rev. John Mann</b>

<b>September</b>	5	11.30am	Christ the way, The Truth, The Life <i>Communion</i>
	12	11.30am	Vital experiences
	19	11.30am	The perversity of people
	26	11.30am	The privilege of worship
<b>October</b>	3	11.30am	In time of trouble <i>Communion</i>

**N.B.** Harvest Thanksgiving services this year will be held on **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at 11.30am and 7.00pm.** Magheramourne Silver Band will lead our praise on the evening service

### **To-day.**

Yesterday has gone forever-  
Forget let it be  
Who knows what tomorrow holds?  
To-day's for you and me.  
Another chance to start afresh  
And leave the past behind,  
Accomplish those unfinished tasks  
And seek some peace of mind

A time to write or make a call  
Encourage someone's schemes,  
And then a little for being you  
To nourish all your dreams.  
A time to reap , a time to sow  
And every hope renew,  
And celebrate this gift of life –  
To-day's for me and you.

### **JOTTINGS**

#### **Sunday School Arrangements**

Children's Day this year was Held on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2010 at 11.30am. Parents please note that the summer holiday period for all our Sunday School children will be from Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June and will resume on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 11.30am.

The crèche will meet every Sunday as usual throughout the summer and will cater for those children who may be present at church during the holiday period.

#### **Church Committee**

Stated meeting –

Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 7.30pm

#### **Church Magazine**

The October issue of our Church Magazine 'FOCUS' will be ready for distribution on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

#### **Annual General Meeting**

The AGM took place on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at 7.45pm. There were 31 persons present.

After welcoming the members Dr. Ryan opened the meeting with prayer and hymn 249 "We love the place O God".

Dr. Ryan took as his theme 'The way ahead' and the passage of scripture from Joshua Ch 1 verses 1 – 9.

He referred to a recent television documentary 'Season Ticket' recalling the life story of Dr. Jack Kyle – the famous Irish rugby international player.

Jack Kyle after qualifying as a medical doctor went to Africa for two years and stayed there all his working life. He became a brilliant and devoted surgeon and a friend to the people and was greatly loved by the whole community

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Reviewing his life experiences he said that life had taught him –

- To be grateful for the past
- To be enthusiastic for the present
- To be confident for the future

Fellow members of Whitehead Congregational Church: -

As we review the worship, work and witness of our congregation this evening let Dr. Kyle's words inspire us to be grateful for the dedication and commitment and sacrifice of those who have gone before us, to be enthusiastic for the opportunities and challenges that all confronting us in the life of our congregation at this present time, to be confident as we look forward to the days ahead and in the words of God to his servant Joshua "Let us be strong and of good courage; to be afraid neither be Thou dismayed – for the Lord Thy God is with Thee whithersoever Thou goest"

It was then time for the reports and the first was from the Church Secretary who said-

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen

It was at our last AGM we decided to replace the slates of the Church roof and this is now completed at a cost of £31913.35. To keep costs down and with the advice from the contractor it was decided to only replace the left hand side of the roof with new slates and reuse the right hand side with the original slates. Also to insulate the roof between the slates and the wooden sarking to help keep the heat escaping through the roof and also to comply with current building regulations. We have had a few problems but we are hopeful that these have now been resolved although there seems to be a lot of flaking recently from the walls but I think this is due to the walls drying out. With this in mind we will take a few moisture readings and again with your approval, repaint the walls of the church?

We still not replaced the kitchen which was another of our most expensive projects and it looks like that we wont well not for the next year or two as it is not a priority. Although the kitchen has been brought to our attention by Carrick Council who have notified us that due to proposals that they have brought out we are not allowed to prepare any food in the kitchen until the appropriate people have been trained and the kitchen has been inspected.

*Cont*

We are in the throws of doing that with the help of Irene and we will keep you informed of any developments. I would like to draw to your attention in Ernest's report under the utilities. You may have noticed the reduction in the Electric and fuel bills. Taken in account we got a rebate due to the fact that we had been using less electricity that last year as they estimated readings on the previous year we can assume that this is due to the new heating system and the replacement of the ceiling especially in the church hall and not due to me turning the heating down to save money. At this rate we will get a payback return in the next few years for the work that we carried out.

All this work costs money and although we do have some money in the kitty it has taken a good knock lately and we are indebted to those of you that have helped out through the building fund and we thank you, but especially to the anonymous person who donated £5000 we thank you. Also to the people who carryout work for the church, Mr Andrew Cluney who carried out the pat testing, Bob Hermin who tidies up the flowerbeds and supplies us with plants, Mrs Rosemary Keyes and her daughter for making Christmas Cards and raised £70 and just recently to Cameron Moore who gave an excellent talk and film show on the wildlife around Co Antrim and has raised £78 with still orders coming in for the sale of his DVD (Its not to late to order a copy). These are just a few of the people I have had time to mention in this report we are indeed indebted to you for your financial assistance to our church.

This most important issue that I have to bring to this meeting is Ministerial duties. Rev Ryan has asked that he wishes to step down from being out 'Part Time' minister in 6 months time due to ill-health and family pressures. As you know Rev Ryan was approached by John Thompson 16years ago to take a few sermons and the rest is history. This is probably not the right time to express the gratitude that we owe to him for the way he has helped Whitehead Congregational over those years, we will do that at a later date, but he will surely be missed when he leaves us and I cant thank him enough for the why he has helped, guided and steered me over the past years both spiritually and personally again thank-you. I mentioned it at our last AGM and although it was suggested that we should maybe merge with Larne Congregational it was felt that this may lead to confliction. How could a minister be dedicated to the needs of one church without affecting the other?

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Services would have to be altered to suit, we would have no control over the minister and our way of praise is different to Larne's and this surely would have an effect of this church's long-standing traditions. And then there is the financial element, How much do we pay for a minister now. When it was suggested at a committee meeting a few years back the outgoing minister of Straid asked for £30,000 a year and a new suit. We don't have a manse how many families does Larne have, could he cope? It takes Rev. Ryan a year to complete his Pastoral duties for us. How do you divide the share of his wage. We financially can't afford a full time minister. Rev. Ryan is doing his best in looking out for someone who he thinks maybe suitable for us as he will tell you there are over 40 vacancies in the Presbyterian church although there are Methodist and Church of Ireland ministers who also retire but we have not explored these areas. If you read the last issue of the Congregationalist you will have notice that over half of the items in the magazine are from churches that also have vacant pulpits. I believe that there are presently 8 vacancies in the Congregational Church and all are hoping for someone to arrive at their church one day to take over?

The committee is at a dilemma do we wait until Rev. Ryan finds us someone suitable, do we advertise and hope we also find someone who is suitable but is willing to work for a small fee, wage. Or are we happy to do what the other churches do and invite ministers or pastors to take our Sunday worship for the foreseeable future, bearing in mind that we need an ordained minister to take communion. Who will attend our sick at home and at hospital and who is going to officiate at funerals? Again we will keep you informed each month of the committee's progress.

And talking of committees, Renée Ginn resigned from the committee this year due to ill health and we welcome two new members, Brenda Wilson and Roy Lennox to help us with our duties.

Finally I would like to thank those who have helped me out over the past year. I would like to let you know the silent workers who help organise events as they arise and keep the church clean and help run the church and I say them in no particular order. Robert Hermin, June Hawkins, Mrs Ryan, Julie Clugston, Ruth McCleary and members of the committee, the Choir, those who clean the church each week, Jean and Eileen on flower duty and those who gift flowers each week. To Brenda, Elizabeth, Cara and Joanne at the Sunday school.

*Cont*

To Ernie and the Rev Ryan and lastly to you for attending this AGM and supporting the Church each week by your attendance as well as financially and I sincerely apologise if I left anyone out and hope I have not offended anyone.

I now commend this Secretary's report to this AGM.

Thank you.

**David Stevenson.**

### **Sunday School Report**

Currently we have 32 members on the roll which is great for our size of congregation. Recently I have realised this by a chance conversation with a member of another local church. He told me their Sunday School numbers had doubled! – I was surprised at this remark, as he went on to explain a new family had joined the congregation and their 3 children had boosted the numbers to 6. We are very fortunate to have this number of Sunday School members, with an average of 25 attending each week.

### **Children's Day .**

The children sang several pieces on the theme 'Following Jesus' and the girls choir sang "Shine Jesus Shine" and "In Christ alone". Prayers were led by Aimee McClenaghan, Ruby Booth and Abby Gilpin, with readings by Michael Crawford and Aaron Wilson. At the end of the service the children were presented with their prizes and full attendance certificates awarded to Ben and Erin Gardner, Daren Spence and Aaron Wilson.

### **Harvest Service.**

At this year's Harvest Service the children were given the opportunity to decorate their own 'window'. They made paper flowers and collages using leaves, seeds and conkers etc, and enjoyed arranging these in our window.

### **Family Service.**

After a heavy fall of snow about a third of our young people could not get to the Family Service. This was disappointing for them as they had worked hard in preparing for this service. Charlotte Lavery read a poem 'Love is the heart of Christmas' which was our theme for the service. The part of Mary was played by Maya Smith and Calum Armstrong was Joseph. A sketch entitled 'The little fir tree' continued the theme. Rev. Ryan's enjoyable talk was about three trees.

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## Christmas Party

This was greatly enjoyed by all. There was fun and games and plenty of laughter and noise and the party food soon disappeared! When Santa arrived he was very chatty this year. Many big eyes and gapping mouths were seen throughout the group of children who were fascinated by his stories.

Ani Tilban has grown up and Lori is our new sponsor child. She comes from Lebanon and is four years old. The children (and some grown ups!) have been saving their pennies for Lori and I'm encouraging some of the older children to write and tell her about us and life in Whitehead. We hope to send her some photographs of the Sunday School.

Throughout the year we have continued our singing, lessons and crafts. Our latest craft was for mothers Day, we made little trinket boxes (something I learned at the very enjoyable (Lady's Nights) and I can assure all the mummies, every box had a chocolate in them when they left here – I don't know how many chocolates actually made it home.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who helps with the Sunday School throughout the year. Elizabeth, Linda, Cara and David for their dedication and hard work; Linzi, Michael and Aaron for helping out each week; I also appreciate the help given by Joanne, Jenny and Sharon; to Irene and June for their help with the music; the parents who supplied party food and most importantly bring their children along each week; and the committee and congregation for their continued support, both spiritually and financially. And last but not least, a very special thank you to Rev. Ryan for his continued encouragement and guidance.

**Brenda Wilson.**

## Bowling Club

Numbers have been fall over the past years and we are now down to 5 members. We are looking for new members to start the new season. Bowls is held on a Thursday evening at 7.30pm and all are welcome especially any younger members of the congregation who want to give it a go.

**Ruth McCleary.**

## WHO'S WHO?

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<b>SUNDAY SCHOOL</b>	MRS. B. WILSON (Superintendent) MR. D. STEVENSON    MRS. L. STEVENSON MRS. E. ROSS	
<b>CRÈCHE</b>	MISS. C BOOTH	
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