

## **Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches**

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Dear Friends

As many people are aware of recent Government directives, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has given instruction that all organisations and activities of our congregations are to be cancelled until further notice. Regrettably, this also includes public gatherings for worship on Sundays. We understand that this is a time of great uncertainty and worry for many. As a church, we will put in place creative opportunities of ministry and pastoral care, which will help us to get through this period of uncertainty.

In spite of this curtailment of activities, we plan to keep in contact and encourage you all to set aside time each Sunday to have some form of worship together. To this end, we plan to provide a weekly devotional and have it distributed among you. Therefore, to facilitate this, we request that, as many of you as possible, please forward an e-mail address to [rmcelnea@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rmcelnea@hotmail.co.uk). Regarding those with no e-mail, we shall endeavour to distribute personally while we remain able. During these unprecedented times I shall be available to have a telephone conversation at any time. As the situation develops so too will our plans.

May you be encouraged to pray at this time of uncertainty to pray, particularly, for all health care workers and their families; many will be working long shifts caring for very ill people. Pray also for our government as they manage this crisis, and our communities as we get used to the constricting of social isolation and its effect on individuals. Also pray that we God's people, would be able to glorify God and enjoy Him even in these times: **Psalm 103:17** *But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—*

In these unprecedented times we may be somewhat overwhelmed by the scale of the situation that we face, as the circumstances and advice on the spread of COVID-19 change day to day, there remains the constant love of God in all of this. If you are unsure about your relationship with God at this time, please call me, so we can talk about the assurance of God's redeeming love and His eternal security.

You Minister and Friend

*Roger McElnea*

### **Read Psalm 91.**

As we read this Psalm and we note the security God provides for those who love Him. The Psalmist speaks about God being the Refuge, the Fortress, the Dwelling Place, The Shield and Strong Tower for our lives, in this Psalm and in many others. These images combine to invoke within us the power of God that he has promised to watch over us and keep us safe. It is likely that there has been no other time in history that this is so apparent, than this present time. The Covid-19 virus has sent the world into meltdown and uncertainty. However God's word remains secure for us.

**Psalm 91:1** *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."*

**Dwelling** - God dwells with his people. First it was in the wilderness and then in the temple at Jerusalem. The New Testament takes this one step further, not only does God want to dwell with his people, but within his people, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Refuge** - a good dwelling place can also be seen as refuge. Scripture often pictures God as the one to whom we can run for safety and security. The Old Testament refers to Cities of Refuge. Places where people could flee for

safety if they had accidentally killed someone. These were strategically located so that anyone in Israel was within a day's journey of one.

**Shield** – this is another symbol of God's protection. It was used by the Israelites as they laid siege to various towns as they conquered the Promised Land.

**Fortress, Strong Tower** – the Old Testament cities were enclosed with a thick wall, they were well fortified in order to resist attack and each one also had a Strong Tower as a last line of defence. This gives us some idea behind why is called some of these titles.

No matter how we defend ourselves in the midst of fear and attack it will be a flimsy defence if we do not learn that God wants to be our Fortress, our first line of defence. Make it your steady habit to run to God in these difficult and uncertain day with Coronavirus. David found that God was Psalm 46:1 "an ever present help in trouble."

Again and again, God promises that he will provide a refuge, Fortress, Strong Tower. That promise is only fulfilled when we run to Him. This is a first resort, aligning our lives with God's values, yielding to His Spirit and trusting Him to act for our good when life seems the exact opposite from good.

Here are a number of promises in scripture, you can look these up at some convenient time:

### **Promises in scripture**

**Psalm** 5:12 For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favour as with a shield.

**Psalm** 3:2 Many are saying of me, "God will not deliver him." 3 But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head.

**Psalm** 59:16 But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. 17 O my Strength, I sing praise to you; you, O God, are my fortress, my loving God.

**Psalm** 61:1 Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. 2 From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. 3 For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.

**Psalm** 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

**Psalm** 9:9 The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. 10 Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

**Proverbs** 14:32 When calamity comes, the wicked are brought down, but even in death the righteous have a refuge.

**Proverbs** 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

### **Dwelling Place**

Psalm 27:4-, Psalm 31:20, Psalm 90:1-2, Psalm 84

### **Refuge**

Nahum 1:7, Psalm 46:1, Deuteronomy 33:27, Psalm 62:5-7

### **Shield**

Genesis 15:1, Deuteronomy 33:29, Psalm 28:7, Psalm 84:11

### **Fortress**

2 Samuel 22:1-3, Psalm 46:2-7, Psalm 62:1-2

### **Strong Tower**

Psalm 61:3

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.