

Mission Connect Article for March 2020 Herald

The joy of salvation

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I have been so encouraged by getting to know many Christ-like folks in Whiteabbey since I arrived here in September 2017, visiting them at home and in hospital in my pastoral care role. These include our senior members who are faithful 'prayer warriors', who attend our fortnightly prayer meetings and commit to praying for our church at home too.

I distinctly remember visiting one of these prayer warriors, a dear friend, who was suffering with health problems. As we talked, the Lord brought Psalm 51 to mind, and in particular verse 12, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." It was a wonderful reminder for both of us that it is God who gives us the willing spirit to cope with the difficulties we have to face, whether that is ill health, damaged relationships, or simply doing the mundane everyday tasks like cooking and washing up. In thinking about this year's Presbyterian Women theme of 'Restore', I feel that this verse is so significant, because as Christians we all need the Lord to continually restore the joy of his salvation to us – to remind us again and again of the deep and overflowing joy we experienced when we first trusted him as our Saviour.

This joy of salvation is so clear, not only in the lives of our Whiteabbey prayer warriors, but also in the lives of our brothers and sisters in our partner church in Mulanje Mission in Malawi. I went out to visit them for the first time last May with one of our elders, Ken Swarbrick, and Helen McGuigan, a member of our other partner church, Dun Laoghaire Presbyterian in Dublin. The people in the church and community in Mulanje are so warm and welcoming, and even though they may not have much materially, they have so much spiritually.

Their love for the Lord is inspiring – their joy as they dance and sing praise to him is real and infectious, even to a wee awkward critter like me! They don't hold back in telling others how God has changed their life and how he can do the same for them – a real challenge to us in Ireland where we can be so shy and even embarrassed about sharing our faith.

This year in July, Ken and I will be returning to Mulanje, leading a team from Whiteabbey of all different ages and skills, to do activities like a holiday Bible club with the children and training for the elders and Sunday School teachers. We look forward to sharing the joy of the Lord's salvation with them again. Thank you so much for all your prayers and support.

Please pray:

- Pray for good relationships and for a blessed time of service that will bear fruit in the years to come.
- Give thanks to God for the privilege of prayer and for our faithful prayer warriors in Whiteabbey.
- Pray that the staff and all other leaders in Whiteabbey will be restored in the joy of the Lord's salvation as they serve him.
- Pray for the Whiteabbey team going to Malawi in July.