

Presbyterian Church
in Ireland

Balmoral Show 2021



Welcome back to Balmoral Show!

We've missed it: the buzz; the banter; the livestock; the stands. These past months we have been returning: to shops, restaurants, hairdressers and places of worship. And this week, we have returned to the Show. It's like a homecoming, back to people and to a place we cherish fond memories of.

However homecomings are not always straightforward. Jesus tells a story about two sons, each of whom needs to be welcomed home. In different ways, both failed to understand how much their father loved them.

The younger son thinks that his dad doesn't love him, so decides that the best life for him will be to get as far away from his father as he possibly can. In a most hurtful act, he asks his dad for his share of the inheritance, effectively saying he wished his dad was dead. Then, *"the younger son got together all he had [and] set off for a distant country"* (Luke 15:13).

The older son seems to appreciate his father more. He stays at home. But don't be fooled. This elder son thinks so little of his father, he doesn't see himself as a son to be blessed, but instead as a slave who needs to earn his father's favour: *"Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders."* (Luke 15:29).

In Jesus' story, the father represents God our Father who loves us deeply, and the two sons represent us, who fail to appreciate God our Father's love for us. Some of us are like the younger son. We think that if God exists he doesn't care about us. And, as a result, we live our lives as far away from God as we can.

Others of us are like the older son. We don't trust God our Father to do the best for us, so we try to be really religious, do all we think God wants us to do, and hope this will earn us his blessing.

Now, back to Jesus' story... Despite failing to see how much their father loves them, the father welcomes both his boys home. The younger son is welcomed back physically: *"... while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him ... the father said ... 'Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'*" (Luke 15:20, 22-24).

The older son is welcomed back emotionally, but there is no record of him responding, as his dad says to him, *"My son ... you are always with me, and everything I have is yours."* (Luke 15:31).

Like these two sons, we have all failed to appreciate how intensely God our Father loves us. As a result, some of us have lived our lives far away from him, while others have religiously tried to earn his favour. We have all got God our Father so wrong. What we need to see is that the death of His Son Jesus on the cross is God our Father's heart-felt welcome to us. If we will trust in Jesus' death to forgive how we have so deeply wronged our Father, and turn back to our Father in love, he will say to us, **"Welcome back"**.



Looking for a church?

There are 545 Presbyterian congregations, north and south.

Who we are:

The name Presbyterian comes from the Greek word for elder. Elders are elected by each local congregation to make important decisions in the church. We long to see people, of all backgrounds, come to follow Jesus, be a blessing to their local community as they live for Jesus there, and play an enthusiastic part in Jesus' work across the world.



Supporting farming families

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland wants to reassure all farmers and their families of our ongoing pastoral and prayerful support. We are aware that farming families face many challenges: outside pressures such as Brexit and TB, or needs closer to home such as loneliness, isolation and financial stress.

This leaflet is produced by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland with the prayerful desire that it would signpost farming families and the wider rural community to help that is available.

Good news for the countryside

Look out for our fortnightly column in the *News Letter's Farming Life*. It is written by Presbyterians from a farming background or who have a heart for the countryside.

Farming Life



There are a number of places you can go for help and support when times are hard

Firstly, it's good to talk. We would encourage you to talk through how you feel with another member of your family, maybe a close and trusted friend, or your doctor.

Your **local minister** will always be ready and willing to listen in confidence and offer prayerful support and friendship.

A directory of ministers in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is available at www.presbyterianireland.org/findachurch

Other agencies which offer help and support:

Rural Support

A wide range of services are offered to farm families including a helpline, signposting to services, a team of mentors and volunteers with expertise in agri-business and finance. Programmes include:



- **Across the Hedgerow** – in conjunction with the Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster. Through telephone calls, providing older, vulnerable and more isolated farmers with a listening ear from someone who cares.

- **Life Beyond** – in collaboration with Embrace FARM, providing emotional and management support for farming families who have experienced loss through farm accident or bereavement.



- **Rural Health Forum** – a strong team with wide-ranging skills aimed at addressing the root causes of stressors for farmers and farming families.

- **Plough On** – aimed at supporting and rejuvenating older members of the farming community, through get togethers and outings.

T. 0800 138 1678

W. www.ruralsupport.org.uk

Ulster Farmer's Union

The largest organisation representing farmers and growers in NI.



- **Land Mobility Scheme** – to help both aspiring young farmers get a foothold in the industry and life-long farmers to take a step back.
- **Life Beyond** – a charity being promoted by the current UFU President, Victor Chestnutt. Life Beyond will work in collaboration with Embrace FARM, providing emotional and management support for farming families who have experienced loss through farm accident or bereavement. Life Beyond will be officially launched at this year's Show and donations can be made on the UFU or Rural Support stands.

T. +44 (0)28 9037 0222

W. www.ufuni.org

Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster (YFCU)



- **YF SEES YOU** – the message to YFCU members: you are not on your own, you are part of something bigger, there is support for you. YFCU members have participated in a social media take over day, talking about mental health issues. The campaign continues, with monthly video catch-ups. While Rory Best, patron of YFCU, has recorded a very helpful video, in which he talks about his own mental wellbeing needs.
- **Mental Health Mentors** – the aim is to identify two members for each county in NI who have strong mental health resilience themselves and train them so that they can support their peers. Hopefully young people will find it easier to open up to one of their contemporaries, than someone a generation older.

- **Across the Hedgerow** – see *Rural Support*

T. +44 (0)28 9037 0713

W. www.facebook.com/yfcu.org

Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI)

Working to make our farms safer places.

T. 0800 0320 121



One man's story

Victor Chestnutt – President of the Ulster Farmers' Union

Can you tell us a little about your background?

I was a farmer since I was two! I come from five generations of farmers, although I was born in Belfast: my father worked with the Belfast City Mission. But when I was two he came home to work on the farm and help care for elderly relatives.

As a family we are all involved in the farming industry. My son David, my wife Carol and I farm pedigree beef cattle, Texel sheep and dairy. While our daughter Zara is a dairy advisor.

How long have you been following Jesus?

As a young child I committed my life to Jesus, to forgive my sins and to live for Him as my Lord. However, for much of my childhood and teenage years I was very much living a 'double life'. To people from my local church, I probably seemed like I was a clear Christian, but at school I wasn't living like a follower of Jesus. Things came to a head when I was studying at Greenmount Agricultural College, at the age of 17. I thought, "I can't keep on living this double life. If I'm going to follow Jesus, it's now or never." And, by God's enabling, I have been trying to follow Jesus closely ever since.

How does your faith influence your day to day work in your role?

My passion for farming matters can be all-consuming, but as a Christian following Jesus is the most important thing to have. Becoming a Deputy President in the Ulster Farmers' Union, I got guidance from God's Word from 2 Timothy 2 6-7, "*The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*" When the only certainty is uncertainty and no-one knows the future, isn't it great we can all know the One who holds the future?



Assembly Buildings, 2-10 Fisherwick Place, Belfast BT1 6DW
Tel: +44 (0)28 9032 2284 Email: info@presbyterianireland.org
www.presbyterianireland.org

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