

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

LOOKING FORWARD SIDE BY SIDE

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM PW PANEL

THEREFORE ENCOURAGE ONE
ANOTHER AND
BUILD EACH OTHER UP

We really hope this finds you well and, whatever the last year has meant for you, we trust you have known the Lord's nearness and strength.

In this letter some of the PW Panel share thoughts of the last year and encourage us to look forward with renewed hope and expectation. We hope you will be encouraged as you read through it.

PW PANEL is a group of women from different congregations throughout PCI who seek to serve the Lord through the work of Presbyterian Women. They are women living for Jesus, being disciples and making disciples.



LINDA BEATTIE IS FROM JOYMOUNT PW IN CARRICKFERGUS AND A MEMBER OF PW PANEL. SHE WRITES:

Normally at this time of year we would be finalising the list of ladies travelling to the Annual Conference in Assembly Buildings. Grabbing a coffee, picking up some items from the resources table, having a look around the bookstall, keen and eager to worship God together. We won't be doing that this year, but we can join together on **Saturday 11th September when we will have our Annual Conference online with our guest speaker, Sophie de Witt.** Keep an eye on the Facebook page and on the website for more information.

This year we have been challenged, we have been stretched, we have had to think outside the box, we have had to be still and seek God and we have been made to do PW a little differently.

I want to leave you with a verse that has been foremost in my mind in recent months. It's a well-known verse from Isaiah 41:10;

Fear not for I am with you, Be not dismayed for I am your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.





HEATHER CLEMENTS

PW President 2020-22

I am sure you have noticed that everyone seems more positive. The weather is warmer, most churches have re-opened, the incidence of Covid has fallen, half the population has been vaccinated, and I know you will be delighted that the hairdressers are back at work.

Over the last year, instead of committee meetings and speaking engagements, I learned the blessing of having more time to be still before God and trust that he is in control. On the first day of lockdown, I set up a WhatsApp group for the ladies of our congregation. The group became a real support for many when we prayed for those who were anxious, ill and bereaved and for those of our church family working on the frontline. We saw God answer prayer in amazing ways.

Many do not have internet so in September we delivered cards and bookmarks. In November we planted bulbs in pots and delivered these at Christmas with a card. We had our first meeting on Zoom in January and everyone was delighted to be together, even remotely. We have continued to meet monthly.

One of the verses I shared on WhatsApp was 2 Chronicles 20:12, "***We do not know what to do but our eyes are fixed on you.***" As we emerge from lockdown and consider how PW groups may look in the future, we may not know what to do, but with our eyes fixed on Jesus we can be assured that he will lead us on to share the Good News of the gospel.

I am really looking forward to having the opportunity to meet with many of you in person or online over the next year. I pray that God may richly bless you as you serve him where he has called you.

MARGARET JOHNSTON

*Connor PW &
member of PW Panel*



Over this last year I have sensed God's presence with me, leading and guiding me one step at a time, teaching me patience and helping me to trust him by reminding me, "Be still and know that I am God". When the news was really bad, I was reminded of Psalm 75:3, "***When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.***" These words brought me peace and assurance.

In Connor PW Group we can truly say that God has been so faithful to us. Technology has enabled us to keep in touch with one another and God has used many WhatsApp messages, texts, emails, video recordings and telephone calls to challenge, encourage and comfort. Mailshots, cake deliveries, Easter cards and bookmarks have also been distributed and God placed such a spirit of generosity in our hearts that we have been able to support a struggling children's home in Nairobi. Some of us have been struggling with personal illness, or that of family members; some have lost loved ones, while others have been in difficult situations, but God has been directing our thoughts to him and his Word and to the amazing privilege we have of carrying everything to God in prayer.

In Hebrews 12:3 we read, "***Consider [Jesus] who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.***" It would be easy to lose some of our zeal and become discouraged as we think on how things used to be but, as we move forward, let's consider Jesus, because it is him we are serving and when we keep our thoughts on what he has done for us, that should encourage us to rise, in his strength and power, to any challenges that might lie ahead.



ELLEN HILLEN

*St. Columba's PW &
member of PW Panel*

Over the past year, I have felt God's presence with me through the ups and downs of separation from family and friends. Like most people, I experienced periods when I felt extremely lonely, so I found great comfort in being able to speak to God in prayer and, through reading his Word in my daily devotions, to hear him speak to me and reassure me.

Our leadership team set up a WhatsApp group at the beginning of lockdown and for 100 days we read a Psalm a day and shared our thoughts. Throughout the year we continued to share devotions, Scripture verses and quotes to encourage and inspire each other. This was uplifting and helped us as a group, supporting one another and sharing in each other's joys and sorrows. It enriched friendships as we opened up about our faith.

As we look to the future, I would encourage leaders to step out of your comfort zone, try new ways to communicate, plan a blended programme with time face-to-face, group chats on WhatsApp, and Zoom sessions.

In Ezra 7:28 we read, ***"Because the hand of the Lord my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me."*** How lovely it is when, together, we can reach out and support others in God's Name.

ESTHER PARKER



*Sinclair Seamen's PW &
PW Home Vice President*

It's planning time, but not as we know it. We can't be certain what we will be able to do. Does it make you feel uncomfortable that your hands are off the steering wheel? Take comfort from the certainty that our heavenly Father's hands are still ON the wheel. He never let go of it through the pandemic, and he never will. As long as we let God steer we can't go wrong. He knows where he is taking us and has his purposes in it.

How will we know where the Lord is leading? We need to be intent on going where he leads, to develop an attitude of dependence on him, to pray together, seeking his will so that, when we discuss our plans, we will be depending on the Holy Spirit to help us make the right decisions.

Currently, we have a significant window of opportunity to assess what we do. Some questions to think about might be as follows; Why do we meet as a group of women? How are we serving the work of our church family? How can we encourage women to become disciples of Jesus? Let's pray as David did in Psalm 25:4 & 5,

Make [us] to know your ways, O Lord; Teach [us] your paths. Lead [us] in your truth and teach [us], For you are the God of [our] salvation; For you [we] wait all the day long.

I trust that we will allow God to steer the ministry among women in our congregations.

Save the date for the PW Annual
Conference online on Saturday
11th September 2021



WOMEN GROWING TOGETHER

Sidebyside