

# THE BUZZ...

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## contents:

- 2 - Devotional by Martyn Cowan
- 3 - Interview with John Finlay
- 4 /5 - BB and Summer Camp
- 6/7 - Jayne Cuthbert and Medair
- 7 - Mark and Zoë Proctor
- 8 - Letters Home

## Devotional by Martyn Cowan

***'And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church' (Ephesians 1:22)***

One of the prayers that the Bible encourages us to pray for one another is that we would know the enormity of God's power, its 'immeasurable greatness'. In particular, this is the power that raised Jesus from the dead and which he now possesses at the Father's right hand. Such power is simply enormous – greater than any other power in heaven or on earth.

Breathtakingly, we are told that the Lord Jesus sustains 'all things' in creation. Two recent scientific discoveries help illuminate the wonder of this. NASA's New Horizons spacecraft spent nine years travelling nearly three billion miles to reach Pluto in the outer reaches of our solar system. This icy dwarf planet is, ultimately, held in orbit by Christ's sovereign power. At the other end of the scale, physicists at the world's largest atom-smashing machine in Geneva have identified the existence of an exotic subatomic particle called the pentaquark. The strong forces that hold those minuscule quarks together inside protons and neutrons are controlled by the One by whom 'all things hold together'. When we realise that 'all things were created through him and for him' we're beginning to scratch the surface of what the incomparable greatness of Jesus means (Col. 1:16-17).

In all the cultural and political upheaval and uncertainty around us – local, national and international – it is good to be reminded that Jesus Christ is 'the ruler of the kings on earth' (Rev. 1:5). He holds power because he has been raised from the dead and has been installed in the highest position imaginable as 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (Rev. 19:16). Even when we see our culture drifting further and further away from the Biblical principles which once shaped it, we ought to remember that all developments are actually steps towards his decisive triumph.

There is however a focus to Christ's powerful reign, and this is what we need the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened to see. As our text says, God put all things under [Christ's] feet and established him as head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). We perhaps get the sense of this more clearly by translating it as saying that Jesus is head over everything 'for the church'. This teaches us something fascinating. Jesus governs everything that takes place for his church – for us! He loved his bride from before time began and through the gospel has lavished grace upon her (Eph. 1:4-8). He will allow nothing to derail his good purposes for the church. Paul asks that the Spirit would open the eyes of believers so that they would understand this staggering reality. Right now, through the encouragements and the discouragements of church life, he is presently working to bring about the full realisation of his good purposes for the church. With this Spirit-given perspective, we can see that Christ's power is so immense that he can use opposition, setbacks and disappointments to further his master plan. Let's pray this prayer for one another, asking that God would enable us to see how Jesus rules over everything for the sake of the church.



## Valerie Clarke meets John Finlay

### *What are your first thoughts in your new role as Clerk of Session?*

First I would like to take the opportunity to say a massive thank you to George Russell as previous Clerk of Session for his previous service in this role. Alongside Jackie Mulligan as Deputy Clerk, both these men demonstrated true servant leadership and gave generously of their time to meet the needs of others within our congregation. We are grateful to God for giving us the wise and gracious leadership of these two men. In all that they have done they have put the gospel first and put the needs of others before their own. They will be hard acts to follow.

I am very grateful to Session for giving me the opportunity and support to serve in this new role, and they in turn have firmly placed their trust in a faithful and unchanging God as I learn and grow in the job. I know that the role requires me to grow in spiritual wisdom too and I will be heavily dependent on help and support from many within the wider church family as I do this. I know that God is the same yesterday, today and forever and the good news that we have to share does not change, but He does continue to do a new thing in each generation. It is both exciting and challenging to take up this role during a time of change within our congregation and I am confident that God will continue to transform us in this place.

### *What does the work of Clerk of Session involve?*

“It’s early days” and I know that there is so much more to be done but the public face of the role sees me welcoming visiting speakers to our church services, reading announcements from the pulpit, organising the arrangements for communion and representing the congregation at community events. The business side of the role so far has required me to coordinate the arrangements for Session meetings, write minutes of session meetings and attend a number of different meetings associated with church business. It would be easy to get caught up in the everyday practicalities of the job which are so important to the life and work of our congregation; however with Session I would also seek to renew our energy into developing our congregation as a community of God’s people. Please pray that God would bless us in this work.

### *How would you summarise the role of Session in our church?*

The role of Session in our church is to serve God and listen to His leading, encourage His people in the congregation to grow in their faith and ensure that we have an effective and vibrant witness into our community and beyond. Justice, love, mercy and humility are important Christian characteristics in this area and we look to these as we seek to serve God where He has placed us.

### *How will you juggle the demands of work, family and church?*

I know I will get this one wrong at times and my wife Fiona will end up putting the girls to bed too often, but everyone is busy!! We can all find time to do the things that we enjoy and think are important (I always seem to find time to eat and go on holiday). I am in the very fortunate position that church, work and family are really important to me and I can genuinely say that I find great pleasure and satisfaction in them all. Our family’s experience of First Portadown is that people within our fellowship have shown kindness and gracious support to us and been a great encouragement in times of sadness and difficulty. I count teaching in Lurgan College and working alongside the young people there a privilege and I simply couldn’t balance all three without the prayerful and practical support that Fiona and I receive from our wider families.



## BB and Summer Camp in Dawlish-Warren

The Boys' Brigade in First Portadown has enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, a long and successful mission. In all that it has done it has played a central role in the life of our Church, and has more than lived up to its motto, being a sure and steadfast influence in our congregation and community.

In this edition of the Buzz we take some time to reflect on aspects of the work of BB through the eyes of its Captain, Stephen Hunter and John Graham, this year's Chaplain at summer camp.

### 4th Portadown BB

If you are aged between 4 and 18 years old and free on Thursday evenings we would love to see you at Boys' Brigade. At BB we learn about God, have plenty of fun, and run a varied and exciting programme that will help you learn new skills and build on your existing skills.

We have four different sections in BB: Anchor Boys, Junior Section, Company and Senior Sections.

#### Anchor Boys

If you are 4 to 8 years old Anchor Boys is the place for you. We play games, listen to stories about God, go on outings, make crafts and work towards a variety of different badges.

#### Junior Section

Boys between 8 and 11 years of age join the Junior Section. On Thursday evenings we learn about God, have plenty of fun playing games and working towards our badges. We also enter Battalion competitions in football, swimming, cross country, Quiz Kids and music. In addition we organise trips and enjoy an action-packed weekend in Kilkeel each May.

#### Company Section

The Company Section is for young people aged 11 to 15. Nights consist of a varied programme including opening devotions; learning new skills - for example, DIY and First Aid; physical activity: football, volleyball and basketball; some very important chill out time, and we start our Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award. We also go camping to England in July.

#### Senior Section

Seniors is for young adults aged between 15 and 18. We learn about God, work towards our Queen's Badge and Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, play some sport and hang out with our friends.

4th Portadown is one of 300 companies in Northern Ireland, and we would love to see you!

We begin again on **Thursday 10th September:**  
Anchors and Juniors 6:30pm – 8:00pm  
Company & Seniors 8:00pm to 10:00pm.

*Stephen Hunter - Captain*

### BB Summer Camp 2015

My role in Edenderry Ministries has enabled me to become involved in many different aspects of community outreach, and I was delighted to accept the invitation to be chaplain for 4th Portadown BB at their annual camp this summer in Dawlish-Warren in the south of England.

I had no previous experience of the Boys' Brigade so I was a little apprehensive as I pulled on my new blue BB jumper and became part of the company. When we arrived at camp the advance party had all the tents erected and with the sunny weather everyone settled in very quickly. We all had a fantastic time and enjoyed lots of different activities including: surfing, trips into local towns, football tournaments and swimming. Everything was so well organised, and it was a great experience!

My role as Camp Chaplain brought with it great responsibility. Each day began with a non-compulsory prayer meeting for the boys and staff; after breakfast we had morning devotions, and evening devotions happened after supper. Each night also ended with tent prayers and a staff prayer time before bed. It was a great privilege not only to talk with the boys during the week but also to pray with each tent and the Officers.

I had the opportunity to address the boys twice daily and my aim was to present the Gospel as clearly as I could. I was able to show some short videos which are very powerful in presenting the gospel, and each of my talks came from the book of 1 Peter. It was wonderful opportunity to lead the boys in thinking about God, sin and ourselves as individuals and how we stand before our God.

# THE BUZZ...

My hope was not only to challenge the boys who did not yet know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, but also to encourage and strengthen those who already professed faith. It was very clear that the Holy Spirit was working in the boys' lives, and it was a great honour to be able to counsel and pray with many of them throughout the week.

I left Camp full of enthusiasm for Boys' Brigade. The discipline, the teaching, and the fun is a credit to each one of the Officers, to each boy and to each parent. The Christian love displayed by the staff to the boys, and the family atmosphere that is promoted within 4th Portadown Company, was very clear to me.

I left very encouraged by the desire of the Captain and his Officers to see the Good News of Jesus proclaimed and disciples made in the BB.

*John Graham*  
*Community Outreach Worker*



## Jayne Cuthbert and Medair



Medair is a Christian humanitarian agency based in Switzerland which brings relief and recovery to people who are suffering in remote, devastated and often inaccessible communities around the world.

Its work has three essential components – health & nutrition; shelter & infrastructure; and water, sanitation & hygiene. When all three work well, communities are able to look after themselves.

Jayne first discovered Medair when studying Tropical Nursing in London, and she subsequently spent more than 3 years with them in 2004-2007, first in the Darfur region of Sudan and then in Northern Uganda. Her interest in disaster relief led to an MSc in Disaster Relief Nursing which included a placement to Tanzania working in a camp for people fleeing the conflict in DRC.

Medair's international staff must share the Christian faith, and must be motivated as followers of Christ to care for those who are suffering with integrity, compassion, hope, and dignity. Their faith inspires them to value each person made in the image of God, to bring hope and to depend on God for the wisdom and courage needed in difficult situations.

In West Darfur, Jayne worked as a Health Manager based in the district capital of Geneina, the hub for all the relief agencies working in West Darfur.

As Health Manager she was responsible for 2 clinics in camps within Geneina town, as well as another 6 clinics in the countryside to the north. Field trips involved training local health workers and midwives, providing medicines and medical supplies, supporting rebuilding of clinics, vaccination programmes and screening for malnutrition. This varied work also included designing new clinic buildings and providing donkey carts as ambulances. On

one occasion a donkey beauty contest was considered (not that the winner would ever have known!)

Roads, such as they were, provided an added complication. Four-wheel drive vehicles were regularly used, as the dry riverbeds, known as 'wadis', changed with the seasons, from deep sandy crossings to wet mud, and then to flowing rivers.

Personal security presented many challenges. Does work stop when vehicles are attacked? And fighting was always a concern, so through constant radio contact, warnings had to be seriously assessed. Apart from that, the team needed somewhere safe to sleep - clinic visits might have to be cut short in order to allow the team to drive to a safer location.

If all that reads like a challenge, it also provided some routine. There was never anything predictable about the arrival of 7000 - 8000 displaced people who confronted relief workers on one occasion. Hungry, empty-handed, and exhausted, children in particular suffered most. Overcrowding and lack of drinking water and sanitation brought dysentery, then measles and meningitis appeared. Against the odds, Medair set to work with a building programme, a vaccination scheme, and emergency health training and within a year the situation was transformed.

In Northern Uganda, where the 'Lord's Resistance Army' controlled large areas of the country, Jayne was the Medical Co-ordinator for Medair where it worked amongst people who were displaced within their own country. Camps created by the government were mostly protected by the Ugandan army and might shelter up to 50,000 people. But very few people had paid employment, and it was almost impossible to grow food. Children born in the camps knew no other life. In such circumstances of little hope many became dependent on alcohol. However, even during the time that Jayne was in Uganda she witnessed people beginning to return to their villages, but it would take many more years to rebuild lives and communities.

Alongside its medical programme Medair offered counselling, which was very important in dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Too many family groups had lost all their adults through death or injury, and community leadership now depended on the older children. To provide the necessary care, 'child-headed' families were offered help by Medair through a social support programme.

# THE Buzz...

Disaster situations can be a real challenge to faith, and the question might be asked what any organisation can achieve in the face of such overwhelming need. But prayer is the appropriate response to these pressing needs. Our God is great and has the power to protect and preserve and rebuild what has been broken. Paul, in Romans 8, writes 'God (has) placed within creation a deep and abiding hope that creation will one day be liberated from its slavery to corruption and experience the glorious freedom of the children of God'. Watching suffering close up, it is hard at times to keep that hope alive.

Refugees and displaced people are in the news too often, but Medair seeks to bring God's glorious hope through faith, dignity and compassion, to those who have been affected by conflict and natural disasters.

*Jayne now works in the Emergency Department at Craigavon Area Hospital.*



## Buzz catches up with Mark and Zoe Proctor

In June two years ago, Zoë and I moved from Portadown to live in Naas, Co. Kildare. We left Legacurry Presbyterian Church in Lisburn, where I had been serving as assistant minister, and started working in Naas congregation and the chaplaincy at Tallaght Hospital. A lot has happened since, and we're grateful for the opportunity to update you and ask for your prayers.

We're a small congregation of just over 20 families, but very diverse. In addition to 'local' folks, we have people from South Africa, Holland, India, Korea and Poland. At worship on Sunday mornings there are about 25-35 of us including children, but by the grace of God we're slowly growing. For example, on Easter Sunday it was wonderful to welcome two new members on profession of faith. And there are others we're getting to know too, especially through the Bible Study we hold in the Manse twice a month.

Each Tuesday morning, Zoë and I take four classes in the local Church of Ireland National School, and this is a wonderful opportunity to teach the Bible to around 90 boys and girls. We really enjoy the time we spend with these kids.

We're also grateful that from November 2014 until June 2015, Zoë had a job working for the YMCA in Tallaght – a vital work among children, young people and parents with many needs, not least the gospel. However this was a maternity cover, and Zoë is once again looking for work, so please pray.

Some other highlights for the congregation since Christmas include: an outreach on Easter Sunday evening using the Billy Graham 'My Hope' DVD; a Mission Weekend in May (assisted by a team from Orangefield Presbyterian Church, Belfast); and the Church Picnic to Emo Court in Co. Laois.

The chaplaincy work in Tallaght Hospital continues to produce many gospel opportunities (with folks of all faiths and none), as well as providing much needed pastoral care. Recently there have been some changes to the team, with two chaplains leaving and one joining us. And since Christmas I've completed in-service training via a pastoral care course at the Irish Bible Institute in Dublin.

We really do appreciate your prayers, and if you're ever near Naas please drop in.

Every blessing,  
Mark & Zoë



## Letters Home...

In this month's Buzz we meet other boys and girls who are living in different parts of the world. David and Sarah McCracken live in Claremorris, Co. Mayo, and Jacob and Manuela Cuthbert live in Impfondo, Congo. After reading their letters, it would be great if you could write back to them, or send a Christmas Card - they would be delighted to hear from you. Your parents can collect their addresses from Anne in the Church Office.



**Dear Friends,**

We live in Claremorris, Co. Mayo, Republic of Ireland. We work with a Mission called European Christian Mission (ECM) and are involved in church planting, which means helping to start a church.

Things are quite different in the West of Ireland, from your home in Portadown. There are not many churches and usually not many children or teenagers in them. To go to church we have to travel into Castlebar which is about 30 minutes from where we live.

The children in the church are sometimes just those of the missionaries. In our Church in Castlebar there are about 6-8 children, and 3 or 4 teenagers including David and Sarah. We do not have a church building but meet usually in a rented hall.

Our Church does not have very many activities, like BB or CE, but there is a small youth group that meets up from time to time. Unfortunately this is not always easy to because of the travelling distance.

We hope that one day there will be a church in Claremorris. You can pray for that.

With love, **Jonathan, Nicola, David & Sarah**

**Dear Everyone,**

Life in Impfondo, Congo is very different from Portadown. Most people live in mud huts which are really just for sleeping. They live their lives outside. Showers and toilets are outside and people also cook outside. They usually put 3 stones together and light a fire to cook over. Missionary houses are more like your houses at home. We have solar panels on our house so that we can have electricity and a fridge. We would love to have ice lollies, but unfortunately we don't have a freezer.

Every morning the church bell rings at 5am, and there is a service before the day begins. But even before this, roosters and other animals often wake us up. Then people start coming to the compound to fill their water canisters so they can cook and clean with. By 6am it is very noisy and we are usually eating our breakfast.

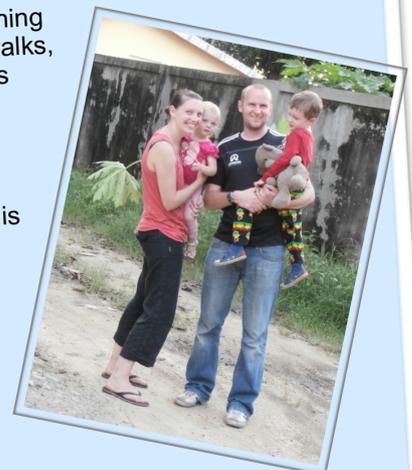
We like to go to the park to play in the sand. To do this we go early in the morning because it gets too hot later on. We also play in our rooms, do crafts, go for walks, bike rides or have friends come and play. We love Impfondo. In the afternoons when it is hot, we have a nap because we can't go outside to play.

On Sundays we go to church at 8am. It is a French service which Daddy can understand so he tells Mummy what the preacher is saying. Even though church starts at 8am, most people do not get there until 8:30. After this there is another service in Lingala. It lasts for 4 hours!

We do miss some things from Portadown but we also have fun things here. We can chase lizards, eat crocodile, we never get cold and we are trying to learn to speak another language every day.

Maybe someday you would like to come and visit us?

**From, Jacob and Manuela** (and mummy and daddy - Kyla and Robert)



Peter Morrow

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