



19th March 2020

To: All Members of Loanends Presbyterian Church

On behalf of the Kirk Session I am taking the unusual step of writing to all our members.

On Tuesday evening the Kirk Session met to pray and look to God in the midst of what is an unprecedented and uncertain time. The Covid-19 pandemic continues daily to spread rapidly and we sense fear is also growing in the community. No one could have imagined that this is the situation we would find ourselves in when the coronavirus was first reported in Wuhan, China on 31st December 2019. The number of confirmed cases and deaths continues to rise daily.

Following formal advice issued by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland through its Moderator and Clerk, the Kirk Session has reluctantly come to the decision **that all congregational organisations and activities will cease until further notice, including corporate worship on the Lord's Day.** This is an unprecedented situation so it is not possible to know when we can return to our normal pattern of worship and weekly activities. However, the Kirk Session believes that this is a necessary step to prevent the spread of the virus and to protect all our people.

We hope to keep you updated with what is happening on our website (www.loanendspc.org) and on our facebook page, where there will soon be a regular weekly bulletin including a "Thought for the Week" and links to various helpful websites and broadcast services of worship. As this situation may continue for some time, we are exploring the possibilities for making worship service available for access through the website or facebook. For those who do not have access to these, we hope also to make it available on cd/dvd – please contact your District Elder if you would like to be included in this. There will also be resources, including a weekly prayer bulletin, available soon on the PCI website (www.presbyterianireland.org). We also urge you to continue to worship God in private or in families and above all pray for the situation. The Moderator of the General Assembly has written the following encouraging words:

We are people of prayer and our first resort in times of uncertainty is towards the one who has ultimate control. To quote the late Dr Billy Graham, "We are to pray in times of adversity, lest we become faithless and unbelieving. We are to pray in times of prosperity, lest we become boastful and proud. We are to pray in times of danger, lest we become fearful and doubting. We are to pray in times of security, lest we become self-sufficient."

Right now, we take our lead from the apostle Paul. Writing to the church at Philippi, where he had once been beaten and imprisoned, Paul tells the believers (4:4-7) not to worry or to be anxious about anything. Instead, Paul instructs them they should pray for God's blessing and make supplication for his protection and do it all with thanksgiving.

The Session is also very aware that the restrictions on movement will be difficult for everyone. **If we can be of any help in any way, please do not hesitate to contact the church through your District Elder or you can leave me a message on the answering machine in the Killead Church Office - 028 9442 2177 at any time.**

In all of this we continue to look to the Lord, who as Psalm 46 reminds us is "...our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

Yours in the Lord's service,

John Murdock

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