

When Life Hurts

A Christian Response to Suffering

If you are struggling with life's hurts, or know someone else who is, and would like to discover the hope God offers in Jesus Christ, why not come along - you will be made most welcome.



Ballyclabber Reformed Presbyterian Church
Thursday 2 September
@ 7.30 pm



Speaker: Rev John George

John is a native of Ballymoney who now works with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Carrickfergus. He has recently formed 'Bruised Reed Ministries' - seeking to help individuals and families experiencing feelings of 'brokenness' and despair because of the pressures and circumstances of their lives.

You will be welcome at any time in Ballyclabber Reformed Presbyterian

Sunday Services
11.30 am & 7.00 pm

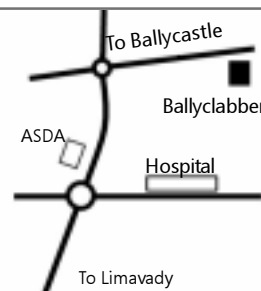
(We meet for about an hour and a quarter)

If you would like to contact us, please get in touch with:

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www.ballyclabber.org



Summer 2010

The Word on the Street

God's Never Changing Word to his Ever Changing World

It's something we've all thought about. Just a routine visit to the doctor, a simple blood test, but suddenly we're receiving devastating news that turns our world upside-down. Christians aren't immune to suffering, as Marjory Vanderpyl, a previous consultant in the A&E Department at Causeway Hospital and who was part of our church family in Ballyclabber while she was here, learnt in a fresh way this year. She's written a little here of what's been happening to her, and how she's responding to her illness as a Christian.

My fight with cancer



Hi! My name is Marjory Vanderpyl and I am both a New Zealander and a consultant physician. While working here a few years ago I really came to love the whole North Coast area. It reminded me a lot of NZ, not just the farming country but also the friendliness of the people.

I have since returned to the southern hemisphere and recently have been working in Australia.

On 25 March this year, after feeling slightly off colour and tired for a week, I developed some bruising and took a blood test which showed that I had acute myeloid leukaemia. Even though I just felt "flu-like" my blood picture was horrendous. My blood was so full of cancerous white cells that it was like sludge. I was on the verge of having a stroke. I wanted to fly home to NZ but had to be airlifted to Sydney to a specialist hospital. The staff there had never seen blood with so many cancer cells. It was pretty touch and go for several weeks as I was on high doses of chemotherapy and became quite ill.

But I was surprised that I wasn't afraid of dying, I felt peace like a blanket

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covering me, and I knew it was God giving me that peace. I have been a Christian since childhood and down through the years Christ has kept hold of me – from my mother dying of breast cancer when I was 24, to my father now in a rest home with advanced Alzheimer's. There were times of trials and hardships but God kept me through them all.

Lord, with your help, I can beat this, but only through you. But if not, well then that's ok by me

Now, from out of nowhere, I have leukaemia. My life changed overnight. But I turned immediately to the only one who could help me. Those first few weeks were difficult; I was toxic with all the chemicals being pumped into me, bloated with so much fluid that I could hardly breathe or walk. Here's something I wrote at that time:

I am wondering why this happened, what has God got in store for me. I just want to trust Him and believe that he is in complete control. I can't do this in my strength but only in God's. Lord, with your help, I can beat this, but only through you. But if not, well then that's ok by me, if that is your will. Just give me the strength to endure the suffering.

As long as your glory is known and honoured. I feel like there is a challenge here... regardless of what happens, what disasters befall me, I shall never stop trusting in God. I don't understand now why this has happened but I cling to the knowledge that God has not abandoned me.

I know God is in control of everything from the beginning to the end. When I look back over the past months and years, I can see his hand at work in my life and I can't thank him enough for all he has done for me. The Bible says that all things work out for his glory and our salvation.

And throughout this illness He has continued to provide for me. I went through a bad patch with side effects from the chemotherapy. I, who love to eat, developed terrible mouth ulcers so that I could only take fluids. But I still had my sense of humour, a clear head, and a vast number of people around the world, from Ireland to NZ to Antarctica, praying for me, and supporting me with messages, and I thank God with all my heart that he has shown me so much love and compassion through them.



I also drew much strength from Psalm 27 which I changed a little:

the Lord is my light and salvation, whom (what) shall I fear? He is the stronghold of my life, of whom (what) should I be afraid? Though an army (of malignant cells) besiege me, my heart will not fear, though war (chemotherapy) break out against me, even then I will be confident, for in the day of trouble, he will keep me safe in his dwelling, he will hold me in the shelter of his temple and set me high on a rock!

And He did keep me safe! I was able to be transferred home to NZ after a month in hospital in Sydney for the rest of the chemotherapy. From an isolation room I watched the season change from autumn reds to winter grey. It has been a rocky road still, these past months. I have had fevers and infections, but thanks be to God, so far they have all resolved.

I made a special "God box" in my mind – a place where I put all those unanswerable questions and gave it to Him to hold. Why did I get leukaemia? Will I have remission? Will there be complications, and if so how bad will they be? What's going to happen in the future? I handed all these questions over to God because I trust completely in his love and faithfulness to me. He is the only one who holds my life in his hands, my leukaemia, and he is the one who gives me the peace to handle it all. I have prayed for healing but if God wills

otherwise, he will give me the strength to accept that.

And he has showered me with so many blessings! Every day, something new and wonderful. I wrote down a list once in hospital of all the good things God has shown me through this leukaemia – the friends I rediscovered, the wonder of modern medicine, getting diagnosed in Australia and not on my travels two months previously in Thailand, a Christian consultant haematologist when I was first diagnosed, and of course, getting closer to God and lapping up his blessings. The list goes on and on! And I rest on God's promise that he will do what's best for me, whatever the outcome.

I am home now; my blood results have been extremely good according to my NZ specialist. I can start returning to a "normal" life, including work. But I know my life will never be the same again. Because I walked through the valley of the shadow of death and God was right there besides me, and there was many a time that He carried me. And now I can say with the psalmist in Psalm 116: ***".. when I was in great need He saved me. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living."***

What an awesome God we have!

