

Phil and Martha Matthews Newsletter (02-15-2021)



**Now abide these three, faith, hope and love...
I Corinthians 13:13**

FAITH

Almost daily we hear present times referred to as “these challenging times” or “these uncertain times,” and so they are in so many ways. Here in Ireland, we are again in full lockdown. We are restricted from traveling further than 3 miles from our home, and only for essential needs and exercise. Schools are back online after opening from September to Christmas. Shops, restaurants and hotels are all closed. The days are short and mostly dark and rainy. Reactions are mixed. Many are philosophical. Others are merely resigned. A few are rebellious. Depression and anxiety are not uncommon. Churches are closed, as they have been for much of the past year. We are not supposed to visit each other’s homes at all.

There are a plethora of online resources and advice being pumped at people. Well-being, mental health- the experts are all out there. Yoga, mindfulness and meditation are promoted through schools and government agencies and community groups. It is wonderful in these challenging times to have our faith in

Jesus, where we find true wholeness and wellness. Pray that the light of Christ might shine into the fog of alternate spiritualities on offer.

Sunday worship, weekly Bible studies, prayer meetings, small groups- all these are online and we are thankful that we have these ways of keeping in touch with and encouraging one another. We are noticing a fatigue with it this time around though. As good as it is, it's nothing like the connection of meeting other believers face to face, of coming together to worship and pray. We are all missing this. One thing we are doing to help meet this need for connection is meeting people for walks and take away coffees. It has been so good just to physically see each other, to speak face to face. We need to be in one another's presence, just as we need to be in God's presence, to encourage each other and ourselves in the faith. Pray that we can use our daily walks to encourage and build up our fellow Christians and to point our friends and neighbours to Jesus and the joys of the life of faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
Hebrews 11:1

HOPE

If ever there was a need for hope, it is surely now. It seems most people's hope these days is in science- hope that the vaccine will give us back our lives. Or in politicians to make the right decisions to protect both our lives and our livelihoods. But Hebrews speaks of "a better hope, by which we draw near to God, (Heb 7:19) "a hope both sure and steadfast, that anchors the soul" (Heb 6:19). How good to have our souls anchored in these challenging and uncertain times! Please pray that we can share this hope in ways that reach those around us. Pray for co-workers to join us.

There is young family in the US who are hoping in God to be able to come and work with us here in Celbridge. They have applied for their visa, a long process which we have been walking through with them, and are waiting for word. They are packed up and ready to come as soon as their visa is granted. Please pray for this young couple and their children, that they continue to hope and are not discouraged by the delays. Pray that if this is where God would have them serve that he will overcome every obstacle to bring them here. And pray that together we can share the hope of the gospel with many here.

And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Romans 5:5

THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” John 13:35. No matter what restrictions are placed on us, we can still love each other and love our neighbour. We can find creative ways to show love to those around us, those in our homes, our neighbourhoods or anywhere. Now is a great time to find creative ways of showing love to those around us, or those far away. These days the smallest gesture can brighten a day. Thank you for showing love to us through your prayers, support, and letters and messages. And pray for us to daily show the love of Jesus to all we meet.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17



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