

BALLYWALTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MAGAZINE

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Dear friends

This will be the first magazine that hasn't been either distributed or edited by Mrs Rosemary Little. Mind you she did have most of the work done, but, then, that was Rosemary! Even from hospital she would have made sure that we all took delivery of the magazine and the Harvest Appeal envelopes.

There are occasions when someone is unexpectedly taken from us and with them disappears a major contribution to the life and service of our congregation. We've had one such experience with the recent death of Mrs Rosemary Little. Rosemary had her own unique and unforgettable impact on Ballywalter Presbyterian Church, and the community around us, from the time she married George in the mid 1950's through to the disabling stroke that she suffered just a few weeks ago. Both her energy and organising ability were legendary and she seemed to combine the work of two or three in running her home, caring for her family, supporting George on the farm and taking responsibility and giving her time to all kinds of activities in the Church. Over the years she worked for Christian Aid, saw that the Church Magazine was distributed, and then, eventually became the editor. She distributed 'Points for Prayer' and Bible reading notes and was involved in all kinds of administration and practical details. Many responsibilities were taken on her own initiative as she saw things to be done and felt it was her duty to take them on. Thus it was Rosemary who made up the list and arrangements for the distribution of harvest gifts, who placed the service sheets in the hymn books, made sure the Bibles were arranged the right way round in the pews, wrote up an inventory for the hall kitchen - down to the last teaspoon, generally the first person there to prepare for a catering, and the list goes on.

Quite a few generations were children in her Beginners' Sunday School and even after she retired children were never far from her

mind. It was quite predictable that she would throw herself into the shoebox appeal for Operation Christmas Child and her usual orderly preparations were in place months in advance. At the same time she had a lifelong concern for the elderly members of the congregation, sometimes selflessly taking responsibility for their affairs when she knew that there was no-one else they could call on. She made sure that nobody was forgotten. Birthdays, notable events, anniversaries were all carefully noted and cards sent, often to the unexpected pleasure of those who received them. Her sheer interest in people was such that she seemed to have a complete knowledge of the congregation and an enviable grasp of happenings within the wider community.

Recognition and prestige were the last motives on Rosemary's mind. Her rewards were the good of the Church and better things in people's lives. She was driven by a passion for doing everything right and well. But although she might have been frustrated at times by the occasional sloppiness of some of the rest of us she never seemed to take offence, though she was always honest, the light of her kindness was never dimmed and she did have the gift of a sense of humour. She was invariably direct and some of us will continue to hear the sound of her instructions ringing in our ears as long as we remember her.

The words of James 1:27 sum up Rosemary's expression of her strong faith in Jesus Christ as her Saviour and Lord: 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this; to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world'. I've also been struck by the account in Acts 9 of how the Church in Joppa sent for Peter because one of their members had died. The person they missed so much wasn't a prominent elder, teacher or evangelist. Tabitha, or Dorcas, was important to them because of all that she had done for the poor and the clothes she had made for the widows. Through a miracle she was restored to them, although the time would come again when they would have to continue without her.

Our Church won't be the same without Rosemary. It could be some time before we find out all things she so willingly and thoroughly took on. So, we will continue with our life and work and, as happens, Rosemary's era recedes into the past. I hope her legacy for us will

be a Church that puts people first as an expression of the compassion and care that Jesus longs to see.

With my good wishes for the Harvest Season.

Sincerely,

Alan Russell.