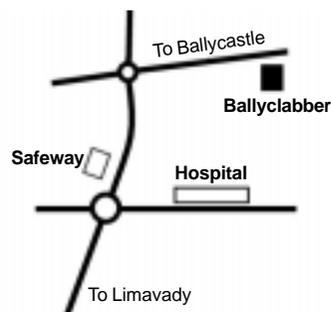


When?

We meet every Lord's Day at 12pm and 7pm for about an hour and a quarter.

Where?

Ballyclabber is located just off the ring road on the Ballyrashane Road, half a mile from the Ballycastle Road roundabout.



Need a lift? Just let us know and it can be arranged.

Contact details

If you would like to contact us

Warren Peel
15 Wheatfield Drive
Coleraine
028 70342018

Introducing...

Our Pastor



Our Pastor is Rev. Warren Peel. He studied Classics at Oxford University and Theology at the Reformed Theological College in Belfast. He is married to Ruth and they have two young daughters, Erin and Rebekah.

Our Church

We in Ballyclabber are convinced that we have a message for our world that is timely, relevant and more important than anything else you can ever hear. What makes us so confident of this? Because the message comes from the Living God who created us. We believe that every word of the Bible is God's word to the human race – a message that tells us how to know him and enjoy a right relationship with him.



Have you ever examined the claims of Jesus Christ and taken a serious look at the Bible as an adult? Perhaps you've dismissed the Lord of the Universe on the basis of a few half-remembered impressions of Christianity from Sunday School. Why not take a fresh look at the Christian message? You will be made very welcome at our meetings for worship any Lord's Day.

Summer 2004

The Word *on the* Street

God's never-changing Word to his ever-changing world



Citius

Altius

ATHENS 2004 Fortius

Summer 2004 will be a feast of sport for everyone who enjoys watching anything from fencing to beach volleyball, when the 2004 Olympic Games kick off in Athens.

The Olympics have been around since 776 BC. After being abolished in 393 AD they were revived in Athens in 1896. 241 (male) athletes from 14 nations took part.

A lot has changed since Athens last hosted the games. There are now 202 nations instead of 14, with 10,500 athletes competing, many thousands of whom are women.

Greece is spending something like £3.9

billion to pay for the Olympics, and this figure is predicted to rise. 4000 hours of live coverage will be broadcast to an audience of many millions around the planet in 200 different countries. It's probably just as well it only happens every four years!

But in the midst of all the changes one key thing remains timelessly unchanged – the Olympics, more than any other sporting event, still represents athletic excellence, as the Olympic motto proudly announces: *citius, altius, fortius* – “faster, higher, stronger.”

Produced by Ballyclabber Reformed Presbyterian Church



“When I want to go back to sleep, I think Olympics. Why stay in bed when another competitor somewhere is getting up and training?”

The apostle Paul was a big fan of the Olympics. It comes out again and again as you read his writings. Describing the discipline and integrity of the Christian life he wrote: *If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.* (Olympic cheats take note!) In the last few weeks before his death he summed up his life using a picture taken from the games: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness.*

But perhaps the most challenging reference Paul makes to the games is this one: *Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*

“Strict training”? I’ll say! If this was true in Paul’s day, surely it’s even more true today, with the stakes, the pressure, and the training programmes all raised to a whole new level.

A recent article in the *Saturday Telegraph* reported on the preparations being made

by Britain’s Olympic medal hopefuls. Listen to what Sarah Price (swimming) said: “I do find mornings hard, especially in winter – At seven in the morning, when I want to go back to sleep, I think Olympics. Why stay in bed when another competitor somewhere is getting up and training?”

Paul Green, going for the Taekwondo gold, on the possible long term effects of his punishing training routine: “People say, ‘Why do you put yourself through it? You’re going to

be in a wheelchair by the time you’re 60’ – stuff like that. But I think it’s worth sacrificing things to get to your goal.”

Time magazine reported a few weeks ago on the training programme for the elite Romanian gymnasts. From the age of fourteen, the country’s top fifteen gymnasts live in a specialised training camp all year round. They have eleven or twelve training sessions each week, and all other aspects of their lives are carefully controlled.

They are allowed only one or two visits home during the year. One Romanian sports writer says, “[It’s] like a military camp – titanic work, military discipline and special diet.”

Why do these athletes do it? Paul says, *For a crown that will not last.* In Paul’s day it was a wreath of pine or parsley leaves. It looked well for a day or two, but after a while it withered and disintegrated. All that labour and effort, but nothing lasting to show for it.

Of course gold medals have replaced the pine wreaths and last longer than their owners do. But even if the medal lasts, a



“Even Olympians grow old—those once world-class muscles grow frail”

souvenir of a glory day long past, will anyone remember?

The Olympic reunion centre in Athens proudly claims, “Once an Olympian, always an Olympian. No Olympian is forgotten no matter how many years have passed since they realised their Olympic dream.”

But the brutal fact is they *are* forgotten. How many Olympic gold medallists can *you* name out of the many thousands? These men and women trained to phenomenal, almost superhuman lengths to become the best of the best. Yet how few are really remembered? Their “immortality” has a short shelf life. Even Olympians grow old—those once world-class muscles grow frail. And in the end their all too mortal bodies will die.

If even Olympians can’t achieve lasting glory or immortality, what hope is there for those of us whose bodies, minds and lives are considerably more average? We have our own goals and ambitions—perhaps not an Olympic medal, but a happy marriage, a bigger home in a nicer part of the country? That new model of car you’ve been admiring in the showroom? A string of

GCSE or A-level passes, a good degree? To make a success of your own business? To get the golf handicap down to scratch? To make the 1st XV?

What would Paul say about such ambitions? Not that there’s anything wrong with them in and of themselves—but they’re “crowns that will not last”. If this world and this life was all there is, it mightn’t matter so very much. If death really is the end of everything, I suspect most of us would settle for a crown that only lasts 50 or 60 years. But death is *not* the end. The Bible says so, and—if you’re honest with yourself—you know it’s true as well.

The great good news of Christianity is that, as Paul puts it, there is “a crown that lasts forever”. Jesus Christ, God himself, came to earth and lived and died to give everlasting life to anyone who trusts in him. Life in all its fullness to all eternity. There’s a goal worth dedicating our whole lives to pursuing! If we live as though this life is our lot we are making the biggest mistake it’s possible for a human being to make—one we will regret forever.

