

Dear Friends,

Christmas is fast approaching, and the shops have had selection boxes, Advent calendars and Christmas sweets for the last number of weeks. And even as I am writing this, still in the first half of November, some people have Christmas trees and decorations up already. This year no one is quite sure what is going to happen, and we often talk about how over time everything seems to change. Well, this year things have certainly changed! Many people struggle with change, it causes anxiety and uncertainty. We have new laws about where and how many people can meet, and we even look different as we wear our facemasks to help protect each other.

In the midst of all these changes and uncertainty we have the good news that God never changes and His love for us is constant.

Hebrews 13 v 8 says "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever". At Christmas we remember that Jesus came to earth, born as a baby, to bring us God's grace. This message has never changed and will never change. We can always rely on God, always place our hope and trust in Him. May this give you hope and peace this Christmas.

Jeff

Christmas Services

Sunday 20th December 11.00 am Traditional Christmas Carol Service

Wednesday 23rd December 6.00 pm Modern Carol service

As numbers at both of these services will be limited, we would ask that you plan to attend one or the other, and if you would please contact Barbara in the office or Jeff before Wednesday 16th December to book a place.

Due to the current situation we will not be holding a Christmas morning service. Instead Jeff will be recording a Christmas morning devotion that will be posted at 10am on the church Facebook page and our YouTube channel.

Let's pray for those on the front-line during these times

We have quite a few members of our congregation who work in the health service and care sector. Here is a reflection from two of them.



Julie Wolff - Anaesthetic nurse, Theatres, Royal Victoria Hospital

How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on your daily work life?

I wear a mask from the moment I enter the hospital, until I leave, only able to remove it when in the rest room. Numerous times throughout the day I don the full PPE regalia, in some cases this can be for several hours at a time. The tighter face mask can leave marks on your face, and leave you feeling dehydrated. It's such a relief to have a day off! Work was a scary place in March, when we were trying to formulate a strategy to cope with the impending pandemic. Although I can now don & doff my PPE with ease, there is a mental fatigue now, like everyone else I would love to see an end to this pandemic.

How has it impacted on your home life?

I always feel unclean coming home, in the beginning I showered in work, but sometimes I'm just too tired and just want to get home. I always wash & wipe down my bags before giving anyone a hug. The family I know were worried for me in the beginning, my daughter still tells me "to stay safe" before I leave for work.

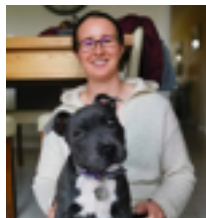
What has been your greatest encouragement during this time?

My greatest encouragement is always my family, who constantly tell me how proud they are of me. It helps if you know you have a loving home waiting for you at the end of your shift. Even the simple act of someone waiting for me at the front door or making me a cup of tea without asking makes me feel better. I also found great encouragement from the church elders. One time in March when I was at a low point, I received a text message asking how I was, that they were thinking of me. The message came at just the right time, I will always be grateful.

What prayer requests would you have for your church family?

- Pray for an end to the pandemic and for the work of scientists to produce a viable vaccine.
- Pray for the charities who provide food or support for our community at a time when they are most needed.
- Pray for those who are shielding or live alone, that they will feel comfort and know that God is near.

**Amy Braniff - Biomedical Scientist
in the Haematology and Blood Bank
Laboratories at the Ulster Hospital.**



How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on your daily work life?

We test blood from GPs, clinics, outpatient departments, health hubs and hospital inpatients. Our service is 24H to cover A+E, ICU, emergency theatre, maternity and any other emergency blood tests or blood unit requests. When all the GPs and clinics closed during the first lockdown it was thought that we would be quiet as “there are no bloods to test”; this was far from the case. While the GPs and clinics were no longer taking bloods, the symptoms of Covid-19 cover many different illnesses. Our lab went from testing around one contagious risk sample a week to around 200 a day. Evenings, night shifts and weekends also became busier once clinics began to reopen; we had to have more staff on out of hours shifts, as patients that had not been reviewed in several weeks were becoming ill and being admitted to hospital. One of the weeks I was on night shifts, the South Eastern Trust was close to calling a major incident as there were no more beds on the hospital site for patients to be admitted.

As treatments and clinics are getting back on track, the amount of blood samples has increased back to 2000 a day, like many others we have had to be flexible in how we work to help to cover the shifts, while keeping ourselves safe.

How has it impacted on your home life?

The biggest change to our home life was getting our Staffordshire Bull Terrier puppy Luna. This was something we had been thinking about and as weddings, trips and holidays all became cancelled we realised that this was probably the best year to do it. Our garden and furniture have since seen better days, but I have been told that settles down!

What has been your greatest encouragement during this time?

Family and friends, it was important for me to still have a connection with people to have a sense of normality. Just to hear that someone found the current situation as hard as I did, made me feel better as we really are all in this together.

What prayer requests would you have for your church family?

Michael works at Swift Aerospace and has now been reduced to a 4-day week.

Pray for the travel industry for job security and the security of the sector.

My younger sister Andrea is a Community Nurse in Bangor. Their team has faced many difficulties with the reduced GP exposure to patients and increased workload to avoid vulnerable patients' being admitted to hospital.

Please pray for the safety of Community teams when they travel to patients' homes, that both the staff and their patients stay safe.

Mission giving in 2020

Thanks to everyone for your ongoing Mission giving throughout 2020 and the response to the Harvest envelopes. This year the Mission Fund has provided financial support to the following:

PCI – United Appeal, Children's Society Appeal & World Development Appeal

Diane Cusick PCI in Zambia

SOS Bus NI

United Christian Broadcasting

Mercy Ships

Revival Movement Association

Bible Society NI

Scripture Union NI

Belfast City Mission

The Link, Newtownards

Open Doors

Martin & Isobel Dudgeon - Platform 67.

Christian Aid

*Some of our young people doing.
Charity/mission work*

Support for Victoria at Camp Shalom, Brazil

Church Members record April 2020 – November 2020

DEATHS

24th April - Mrs Rosaline (Renee) Jordan

1st May - Mrs Jean Anderson

2nd June - Mr Wilson Carson

31st July - Mrs Jacqueline Carson

31st July - Mrs Maureen Irvine

7th September - Ms Karen Hannah

Pray for the families of all who have lost loved ones, in a year when restrictions have made a time of bereavement even more difficult.

Drop off dates for foodbank and Christmas gift donations

10am-12noon on Thursday 26th November for Belfast City Mission

10am-12noon on Thursday 17th December for the Foodbank

Check the church website and Facebook for full details.

Presbyterian Children's Society and World Development envelopes will be available on 26th November and 17th December respectively, and also in the church pews in December as usual.

As a church family we want to be able to help YOU at this time. If you need anything, please do ask and we will endeavour to help you. Please phone, text or get in touch with the church office: [Tel: 028 9181 6225](tel:02891816225), Jeff Mob: 077 9955 2804 or Fiona Mob: 079 7418 0321.

Website: www.strean.org

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