

# O' COME *Emmanuel*

Isaiah 9:6



**PULSE**

Volume 60 Number 3

Christmas 2020



McQuiston  
Jesus Centred  
People Focused

## EDITORIAL

Dear friends,

This time last year we could never have imagined the impact that a virus emerging on the far side of the world, in a city most of us had never heard about, would have on our lives and for such an extended period of time.

This Christmas will be like no other before it, even those in wartime. Not that I was around then; I'm much too young!



Think too of the contrast between this Christmas season and the conditions in Bethlehem on what was the first Christmas.

Then, the towns of Israel were packed because of a census, in Bethlehem there was not even room in the inn for a young couple expecting a baby.



Today at the other extreme we are all socially distanced, we are not permitted to meet in large groups; hotels and restaurants will be closed or restricted in their opening hours. There is no room for any of us in the inn!



Despite all of this I am still looking forward to Christmas, albeit a quieter and less busy one.

Perhaps in a strange and unexpected way it will allow us time and space to think about the spiritual truth of Christmas rather than the normal party season it has become.



What is that truth?

That God became incarnate and lived among us, that in Jesus we have seen and encountered the glory of God who, as John wrote, is full of grace and truth. God stepped into time to rescue a fallen and sinful human race.

So this year, rather than complain and lament about the things we miss but probably didn't need anyway, things that are little more than the dressing to the season; let's use the space wisely to reflect upon the wonder of God's grace and the joy of the new life He gives to those who come to Him.



Karen, Sam and I hope that despite all the concerns and restrictions of this Christmas you are able to spend some time with loved ones and enjoy the blessings of the Christmas season together. We really do value your friendship and prayers.

Together then, let's look forward in faith to a New Year and to the things that God has planned for us as a church family in 2021 and beyond. Glory to God in the highest!



With our love and prayers.

***Robert, Karen and Sam***

## **SPECIAL SERVICES**

### **20 December @ 11am**

Family Service

### **20 December @ 7pm**

Carols by Candlelight (see below)

### **23 December @ 7pm**

Carols by Candlelight (see below)

### **25 December**

Service will be available online only

### **27 December @ 11am**

Mr John McCandless

### **3 January @ 11am**

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

### **24 January @ 11am**

Ladies Fellowship Gift Day service

### **7 March @ 11am**

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Please note that, unfortunately, only 50 persons can be accommodated at Carols by Candlelight, so two services are scheduled this year.

Should you wish to attend please request your preferred service in advance by emailing the church at [churchoffice@mcquistonpc.org](mailto:churchoffice@mcquistonpc.org) or by phoning Joan Gardner on 07808181523.

The service held on 20 December will also be streamed online for those unable to attend.

## ORGANISATIONAL NEWS

### Ladies Fellowship

The restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic have interrupted our normal schedule of meetings and are likely to do so for the foreseeable which makes planning ahead difficult.



Our theme for 2020 - 2022 is *"Side by Side"* based on 1 Thessalonians 5 vs 11, *"Encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing."*



How appropriate are these words. We certainly never expected to be challenged to come alongside each other and build each other up in the midst of a pandemic.

As we continue to experience everyday reality and church life very differently from all we are used to, more than ever we need to live out this theme of *"Side by Side"* albeit from a distance. For now our focus is on being side by side in prayer and care for one another.

The work of Mission at home and overseas continues through our projects and in light of the challenges all PW groups are experiencing this session these projects will run through into 2021/22 session.



Our Home project supports the work of CARE NI (Christian Action Research and Education) who seek to uphold human dignity and to support the most vulnerable people in society. Overseas we will be supporting the Okhaldhunga Community Hospital's work in Nepal offering essential medical care to expectant mothers.

Your generous financial support each year at our Gift Day service for our Mission projects is greatly appreciated. A Gift envelope is enclosed with this magazine and it can be returned on Sunday 24 January 2021.



With every blessing.

**Joan Gardner**

## Boys' Brigade

Given the current Covid-19 restrictions, the 19th Belfast Boys' Brigade Company has been unable to resume normal face-to-face activities at present.



The leaders have set up Zoom meetings on a fortnightly basis and have been providing quizzes as well as Bible videos and digital devotions. Each meeting ends in prayer, ensuring that each of the boys and their families know that we are praying for them through this difficult and anxious time.



There may also be activities for them to carry out between each fortnightly call and they can share what they have done with the group during the following call. The Zoom calls have been a great success and see most of the boys logging in on a regular basis. It has been great to catch up with all the boys and see how they are doing.

BB headquarters have provided risk assessments that must be met before face-to-face activities can be resumed. Zoom calls will be the plan until the risks assessments have been completed and the church feels it is safe and acceptable to resume.

We would appreciate prayer for all the leaders and in particular our Captain Jim Ross as he continues on his road to health and recovery. We miss him dearly and very much look forward to his return in due course.



As Acting Captain, I would like to thank all of the leaders for their hard work in preparation of quizzes, Bible videos and devotions for Zoom calls involving all sections.

Through this strange time and with God's help and guidance we will continue to make contact with all BB members as we strive to advance Christ's Kingdom amongst the boys and their families.



*"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, secure and steadfast."*  
Hebrews 6 vs 19

**Stephen Briggs**



## McQuiston Lunch Club

Unfortunately due to current restrictions we have not been able to meet since March and sadly it seems that we will not be meeting up again until the New Year at least.

We wish all our Club friends good health and God's blessings.

*Sheila McAllister*

## Transformers

As everyone knows, this year has been like no other. As we went into lockdown everything had to close, church did too. So the only way to keep in touch with the children was through text messages and phone calls to the parents. The leaders decided that we would try and meet by Zoom so at least we could see the children and parents and have a chat with them.



October was our first meeting and it went so well. We had a chat about what they had been doing since we last met in church. They certainly had plenty to tell us. We had a story and a mini quiz. Before our time was up we prayed for the children and let them know we would meet virtually again in November.

Our second meeting consisted of our chat, story and a craft. We delivered a craft to each house and completed it together when we met again on Zoom. We intend to meet again the week before Christmas.



We don't know what the New Year will bring but we know God's hand is upon it. He is with us no matter where we are and no matter what we do.



We know the congregation pray for the leaders and children and we appreciate it very much. If we can ask for prayer that when we can eventually meet again in church that the children will return.

*Heather Sergeant*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Operation Christmas Child



A massive thank you to all members of the congregation who contributed in any way to this year's Christmas Shoe-box Appeal. 71 shoe-boxes were filled and will bring hours of great delight to children abroad.

### Free Will Offering

Please note that if you wish your Free Will Offering or giving to other funds to be credited to 2020, these must be received no later than morning worship, Sunday 27 December 2020.



Any monies received after this will be credited to 2021.

### Organisational Accounts

Please note that all Organisational Accounts should be audited and returned to myself no later than Sunday 31 January 2021.

### Presbyterian Herald

We hope you understand the sudden cessation of the Herald following March's lockdown. There will be no further Heralds produced until the beginning of 2021 at earliest.

### Presbyterian Children's Society

This year more than ever we need to have our collection for the Society so would all usual contributors and those who would like to give please give your donations to Sheila McAllister as soon as possible. Many thanks.

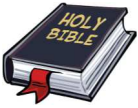


### Storehouse

The Storehouse facility continues to operate supplying those in the local community who are requiring help with food at this time. Thank you for all your donations of food or finance, it is very much appreciated.

***“Whatever you did for one of the  
least of these brothers or sisters of  
Mine, you did for Me”***

Recently I listened to a true story by a priest which impacted me and taught me a valuable lesson.



The title was ‘Who was the Hungry Person?’, and it was a Gospel reflection on Matthew 25 vs 31 - 46.

One day the priest was in his study preparing a sermon when the doorbell rang. He said that, at the time, he was very busy and felt a little impatient at the interruption.

At the door was a fine looking man, who was thin and had a beard. He gave his name as Jim\*, and asked politely for two sandwiches.

As the priest went to the kitchen, he asked himself what he would put in the sandwiches – either cheese or ham, or both cheese and ham. He thought, ‘Will I be generous or economical?’



At that moment, he heard a voice (in his head) clearly saying ‘Prepare a sandwich as if it were for Me’ and, in that moment, he realised who was speaking to him - Jesus.

That changed everything! The cheese and ham sandwich was given to the stranger at the door, who politely said ‘thank you’ and left.

During the year Jim came back regularly and the priest no longer felt impatient as he prepared the sandwiches. He realised that the stranger was doing him a favour - that he would give Jesus two sandwiches willingly any day.



After about a year Jim no longer visited and, on enquiry, it was to learn that Jim had died. This visitor and the lesson learned were never forgotten by the priest and he was forever thankful for the lesson Jesus had taught him through the stranger.

All of us have areas in our lives that are not surrendered to Jesus. It is sometimes difficult to obey the teaching of our Lord, as we may feel we are in the right, or we don’t want to be ‘used’ or ‘abused’, or taken for granted.

As in this story we may, at times, be required to yield our wills to Jesus – as day by day we see Him in each person we encounter.



*\*Name changed to protect identity.*



In so doing our words and actions will change if we remember that we are dealing with our Saviour.

This Christmas, as we worship the King, remember that He is the King of our lives. He still is not ashamed to knock on the door of our hearts to call us to live our lives for Him.

He always gives us this beautiful invitation (often challenging) to serve Him here on earth.



Our choice is, in the words of our Saviour, *"I was hungry and you gave me to eat"* or *"I was hungry and you did not give me to eat"*.

This Christmas we will all have opportunities to show kindness, to share a word of love, to show patience, maybe an hour of our time or to give a helping hand.

Jesus  
others You  
**Joy**

The message is to recognise Jesus *"In as much as you did it onto one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you did it onto Me"*.

May we each experience the joy of our Lord this Christmas.

**Anna Johnston**

## THE LITTLE FIR TREE



At Christmas time so long ago,  
The winds were blowing high and low;  
A little green fir tree grew by the inn,  
A little fir tree straight and slim.

And, looking up, across the night,  
The fir tree saw the Star so bright.  
The little fir tree wondered why,  
The Star was moving in the sky.



The star shone over Bethlehem,  
Over the stable inn, and then,  
The little fir tree shone with light,  
Lit by the star that wintry night.

The fir tree shone so long ago;  
And still in winter's frost and snow,  
The little green fir tree come each year  
To bring us joy and Christmas cheer.



**Margaret Rose**

## Moderator's Christmas Appeal

2020 may well be long remembered for the scenes of unimaginable suffering that swept the globe as a result of Covid-19. So far there have been around 50 million cases of this disease and well over a million people have lost their lives as a direct result of the virus.



This tragedy is compounded in millions more homes and families due to the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the economies of the more fragile, low-income nations.

Healthcare systems have fallen apart under unbearable pressure, tens of millions of daily wage earners have lost their jobs, and we have witnessed the vulnerability of 65 million refugees and internally displaced people for whom home is currently a densely populated camp or detention centre.

Covid-19 has been wreaking havoc and undoing decades of development work in so many parts of the world.



To respond to this tragedy a Moderator's Appeal towards the ongoing and broad-ranging Covid-19 emergency relief effort has been launched. To find out more and to donate, please visit [www.presbyterianireland.org/christmasappeal2020](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/christmasappeal2020)

Funds donated will be distributed between PCI's relief and development partners Christian Aid and Tearfund who are already engaged in longer term sustainable development work amongst those most affected by Covid-19 and who are well-placed to direct additional efforts to combat the crisis, and to PCI's partner churches in South Sudan, Malawi, Indonesia, Nepal, Lebanon, Syria and Romania.



Thank you for your continued generosity.

***The Moderator (PCI)***

## AT REST

***"I am the Resurrection  
and the Life"***

**25 May**

Mrs Elizabeth Steele  
9 Walker Court

**30 October**

James Milligan  
28 Ellis Court

**16 November**

James McCormick  
18 Jocelyn Gardens

**22 November**

Miss Noleen McCullough  
33 Channing Street

## IN THE WOOD

Cold Winter's in the wood,  
I saw him pass,  
Crinkling up fallen leaves,  
Along the grass.



Bleak Winter's in the wood,  
The birds have flown,  
Leaving the naked trees,  
Shivering alone.



King Winter's in the wood,  
I saw him go,  
Crowned with a coronet,  
Of crystal snow.

## VESTIBULE OFFICIALS

***"Be not forgetful  
to entertain strangers"***

**January**

John Shivers, Angela Shivers  
Convenor: Joan Gardner

**February**

Raymond Wray, Linda Wray,  
Judith Connolly, Phil Kemps  
Convenor: Alan Bousfield

**March**

Richard Hughes, Roy Noble  
Convenor: Joan Gardner

**April**

Ken Galbraith, Brian Erskine,  
Sheila McAllister  
Convenor: Ken Galbraith



**FOR UNTO YOU IS  
BORN THIS DAY  
IN THE CITY OF  
DAVID A SAVIOUR,  
WHICH IS CHRIST  
THE LORD.**

LUKE 2:11

***Eileen Mathias***

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