



LIVE AT PEACE WITH EVERYONE



What do you do with your shopping trolley once you have transferred your groceries into your car? Do you push it to one side? Do you return it to a trolley station or near a trolley station? It appears that how you deal with your empty trolley is one way your level of responsibility can be measured!

When you stop to think about it there is a certain logic and reason to this assertion. Your now empty trolley is potentially available for someone else but only if you make it so. Abandoning it or leaving it somewhere convenient for you but not for others means it is no longer available. You have had the benefit but you are inadvertently denying others. This scene of abandoned trollies and the picture it creates of responsibility or lack of responsibility made me think of a statement tucked away in Romans 12:

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)

Our responsibility is to ensure, as far as we are able, as far as it depends on us, that the other person or persons know and experience peace. The understanding of peace we find in the scriptures is much more than the absence of conflict. It is the about wholeness, completeness and fullness of life. In other words, our calling as followers of Jesus is to contribute to the wholeness, fullness and life of others. We are to be bringers of life. We achieve this not by one or two spectacular projects or actions but by a lifetime of small acts of kindness. A lifetime of considering the needs of others before ourselves. A lifetime of fulfilling our responsibilities instead of being fixated on our rights.

Eight months ago, we were plunged into a lockdown. It is, was and still is, a time of uncertainty. Progress in the fight against Covid-19 has been something of a rollercoaster. Our hope, and our prayer is that 2021 will bring better times and the gradual return to social engagement and more freedom to enjoy life beyond the confines of our homes. Until that time however we need to accept our responsibilities and follow meticulously the mantra of hands, face and space.

On behalf of the Steering Group and Kirk Session I want to express thanks to everyone who has attended worship services on Wednesday evenings and Sunday mornings since mid-August. The willingness of everyone to wear masks throughout the service; to use hand sanitizer and to maintain social distancing has made the task of supervising services so much easier. Every step has been taken to ensure that the church buildings are as safe as we can make them. To that end while the heating of the building continues, we have also maintained ventilation by keeping windows open. This is of course not an ideal combination especially with an old building like ours. I would therefore urge members to come to worship suitably attired – hats; scarves; gloves; warm coats and lots of layers are the order of the day!

As we walk together through the next few months, I pray we will demonstrate our love for one another and for our neighbours by adhering to the instructions and directions of our government guided by medical and scientific advice. Hands, face and space is easy to remember and easy to follow. These three steps are not costly but they are effective. They are as easy to follow as it is to push the empty trolley back to the trolley bay ready for the next customer!

May we all act responsibly, with our shopping trollies and with our hands, face and space compliance, and in doing so may we play our part in loving our community and as far as it depends on us living at peace with everyone.

Love and blessings from your friend and pastor Albin

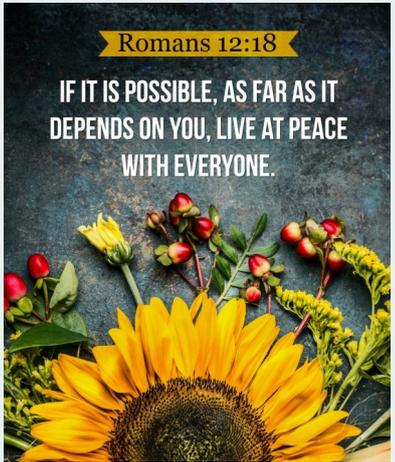
ARRANGEMENTS FOR SERVICES IN NOVEMBER, DECEMBER AND JANUARY

For November

Services will continue on Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm and Sunday mornings at 11am

For December

Services will continue on Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm EXCEPT for Wednesday 23rd December. THERE WILL BE NO SERVICE ON WEDNESDAY 23rd December.



“not by one or two spectacular projects or actions but by a lifetime of small acts of kindness”

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Live at peace with everyone 1
- Services—Nov, Dec, Jan 1
- 100th Birthday Celebrations... 2
- Use of buildings..... 2
- Christian Aid 3
- Eco Task Group 3
- Student Update 3
- Presbyterian Herald 3
- Finance Report 4
- Our Buildings 5
- Storehouse..... 6
- BCM Christmas Appeal..... 6
- Bereavements 6





On Sunday 20th September, one of our church members, Essie Chambers celebrated her 100th birthday. SPC was able to send a card from the whole church family and a lovely arrangement of flowers created by Kris Patterson. Essie also received a card from the Evergreens.

Essie is currently in Holywood Care Home, and though current restrictions meant that her family could not visit her in person, they were able to send cake, balloons and strawberry pavlova, (Essie's favourite)!, to help her celebrate.



Congratulations also go to David Kerr who also celebrated his 100th birthday on Saturday 13th June. David was able to celebrate with family and many of his neighbours in Castlehill Drive who called to wish him "Happy Birthday" (suitably socially distanced!) Whilst celebrating the post arrived and David was able to share the card he received from Her Majesty the Queen.



Even to your old age I am He,
and to grey hairs I will carry
you. I have made, and I will
bear; I will carry and will save.
Isaiah 46:4

Service arrangements continued...

December

Services will continue on Sunday mornings at 11am EXCEPT for Sunday 27th December. THERE WILL BE NO LIVE SERVICE AT STORMONT PC ON SUNDAY 27th December. A recorded service will be broadcast on Sunday 27th at 11am on Facebook and YouTube and our church website.

January

Services will continue on Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm and Sunday mornings at 11am

Special Arrangements for Christmas Day

There will be a live service at 10:30am on Christmas Day at Stormont PC. It is hoped to live stream this service on Facebook and YouTube (More details will be emailed; posted on Facebook and placed on our church website)

In order to accommodate as many people as possible and do so safely and with appropriate social distancing we are asking that any family or church member intending to be present on Christmas morning at 10:30am MUST PREREGISTER by either:

Email church office: office@stormontchurch.org

Email Albin: albin@stormontchurch.org

Telephone church office: 028 9065 6642

Telephone / Text: 07740580295

USE & MANAGEMENT OF BUILDINGS

Since mid-August our buildings have been open again for worship services albeit with limited numbers and complying with all required mitigations including social distancing, hand sanitizing and wearing of face coverings.

An enthusiastic and efficient team of volunteers has supervised our Wednesday and Sunday services and a welcoming, comfortable and safe environment has been created. Despite all the required mitigations there has been a real sense of gathering and a real sense of meeting with God.

As we move into the autumn and winter months the challenges remain and the arrangements for our gatherings will continue to be in place for some time to come. The Kirk Session and its Steering Group are grateful and thankful to everyone who has attended worship and the way in which they have adapted to the new arrangements. The task of supervision has been made easier by the willing compliance of our church family. Thank you for working together with us to make Stormont Presbyterian Church a safe space for everyone.

Our Sunday (and Wednesday) gatherings have not been like our normal gatherings. In addition to the mitigations already listed singing by the congregation has not been encouraged. While a limited number of people have participated in the live services and video contributions have also been incorporated. Thank you for your understanding and please be assured that arrangements are regularly reviewed in light of government, health and scientific advice.

In addition to our gatherings on Wednesday and Sunday, JAM has also gathered on Sunday morning and YF on Friday evenings. Specific protocols have been drawn up for both groups and once again Session and the Steering Group very much appreciate the care taken by leaders in following the arrangements meticulously. In light of changing regulations both JAM and YF have now become online only until further notice.

A twice monthly Prayer Gathering is also being hosted online via ZOOM on Tuesday evenings. Learning with Jesus is a relaxed discussion-based gathering, exploring John's gospel, also hosted on ZOOM on Monday mornings and Monday evenings twice a month

From mid-September the Playgroup resumed Monday through Friday mornings using the Main Hall, and the ballet Class on Wednesday afternoons using the Park Hall. The Steering Group agreed protocols with both groups and to date these arrangements are working well. However changing regulations mean that these arrangements are under weekly review.

It remains to be seen what the coming weeks will bring regarding changes in restrictions. The Steering Group continues to monitor the advice and guidelines issued by government through the Executive Office and from PCI. If alterations to our current arrangements are required the Steering Group will communicate directly with church members setting out any changes that need to be made.



CHRISTIAN AID AUTUMN APPEAL

Christian Aid Autumn Appeal. Many thanks to everyone who helped to support our Autumn Appeal for Christian Aid. We celebrated with several events - a Big Walk, where some of us walked in the Mourne Mountains for a day, a shorter walk around Victoria Park, and a virtual Brew and Bake coffee morning. Together we raised over £490.00 for Christian Aid.



ECO TASK GROUP

A task group of the Committee are looking into how we can, as a congregation, become aware of issues of climate change and how we can respond to the climate crisis.

As a congregation we have registered with EcoCongregations Ireland www.ecocongregationsireland.com where we are getting encouragement and advice.

Stormont church has started to address these issues over the last number of years by encouraging recycling, reduction of paper use, especially in the office, car sharing or walking/cycling to church services and events. We have also been looking into ways of making the church buildings more eco friendly.

We are hoping to arrange a 'tree planting' day on the Comber Greenway, so helping to reduce our carbon footprint.

During the present pandemic, when we have been unable to use our church facilities as normal, we have been thinking of tips we can give each other to become more eco aware in our homes and so reduce our individual Carbon footprint.

Remember – none of us can do everything necessary to stop climate crisis – but each of us can do something today.

Here are a few suggestions:

We have a Refill Quarter on our doorstep which is very exciting. This shop is on the Belmont Road and enables us to refill and reuse containers e.g.

- Toilet rolls which have no plastic around them are 100% recycled and 50% of their profits are donated to help build toilets
- Refill hand soap (pump type)
- Refill washing up liquid, shampoo, conditioner
- Refill washing machine liquid, fabric softener
- Eco friendly pot scrubbers
- Bees wax wraps instead of cling film
- Sandwich pockets instead of tinfoil
- Lots of food stuff e.g. flour, sugar, spices, nuts, cereals, all types of cooking oils and lots more

As with anything that you swap it takes a bit of time to get used to it e.g. the washing liquid hasn't got a smell and isn't as bubbly as Fairy or shop own brands but everything we do has an impact.

When grocery shopping, bring your own reusable shopping bags. Try to reduce the amount of plastic covered produce you buy. Where possible, buy items in glass bottles rather than plastic containers, as glass is easier to recycle than plastic.

Commit to decreasing the amount of food you waste.

Decrease your intake of meat.

Source food locally where possible

Turn off electric items when not in use.

If you have any further practical ideas of how we could reduce our impact on Climate change and so reduce our carbon footprint, we would love to hear from you.

"You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you." Nehemiah 9:6

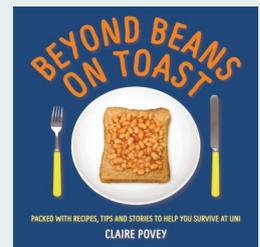


STUDENT UPDATE

September 2020 saw two of SPC's younger members leave N Ireland to start as first year students in university.

Rosie Adams is studying geography at Durham university, and James McLachlan is at Liverpool Hope university studying primary education. As in previous years, the church likes to give our school leavers a small gift, and this year Rosie and James each received a tin opener, tea towel and book, "Beyond Beans on Toast", which is full of simple recipes and useful tips to help students make the most of starting university.

Please remember Rosie and James and all students from our congregation in your prayers, as they navigate student life in the very different environment of 2020.



PRESBYTERIAN HERALD

The publication of the Presbyterian herald has been suspended temporarily as a result of the covid-19 emergency. Although there will be no more printed versions in the near future, April's edition did make it through the production process before work and travel restrictions came into force prohibiting its distribution by herald agents across Ireland. The April edition of the magazine is also available free online.

As soon as production is up and running again we will be in contact with all subscribers.



FINANCE UPDATE

2020 has been a strange year! I often comment that it is difficult to compare church years to each other particularly when it comes to finances and this has proven to be the case now as I try to review and compare our finances. I apologise as I cannot give an accurate picture of our finances as I am still processing all our income and expenditure. Thank You for your financial support throughout this challenging year. Contribution letters have been distributed and the amounts in these letters include contributions up to the end of September. Traditionally the final 3 months of the year are the busiest regarding income to the various funds and I hope that will remain unchanged for 2020. May this letter encourage you to review your support of our various funds and top up your contributions as you see fit.

We were unable to physically meet for worship. Our church building was closed for almost 6 months and organisational activity, Playgroup, Evergreens and all other groups that use our buildings could no longer meet. But you, our church members continued to support financially by standing orders, bank transfers, paypal, posting in cheques to the office and even filling church envelopes and bringing them in bulk once services resumed.

Although our building was closed and we suspended as many costs as we could, day to day running costs such as electricity, gas, salaries, insurance and many others still had to be met. We availed of the government furlough scheme to assist with salary costs and we reduced staff hours when appropriate. Our minister, assistant minister and administrator worked from home and through the joys of technology we found new ways to work, to connect with each other and enjoy worship and teaching.

Freewill Offering Fund

Income to this fund is unrestricted and is used to meet the day to day running costs of the church such as salaries, utilities, postage, phone, internet etc. Income to this fund has remained steady and it is my hope that at the end of December when everything is processed, we will be in the position of the income having met all the costs.

Building & Maintenance Fund

Income to this fund is restricted to meet building related costs such as repairs and maintenance of the church and the manse. The church and the manse are assets and it is our responsibility to maintain and update these buildings. Our physical church building is very old and our manse is approximately 25 years old. Each year we spend approximately £20K dealing with routine costs and adhoc repairs to the church building and equipment. We tend to forget about maintenance of the manse because we are not in the manse every week. You will have read in the Buildings Update we have undertaken quite a lot of additional building work this year with more essential work planned for 2021.

The cost of the church kitchen and redecoration of the Thornhill Room was covered by the insurance claim.

Other work, such as essential maintenance to the church roof and the upgrading of the Main Hall floor, has come from this fund. The further improvements to the toilets, Thornhill Room, Foyer and Manse are ongoing and are estimated to cost around £35,000.

These improvements are intended to directly support our mission, for example Messy Church.

I am asking that you prayerfully consider supporting the B&M fund if you are not already doing so or if you do already support the fund, enhancing your contributions over the remainder of 2020 and into the new year. You will read below about our investments and how we intend to use some of these investments to update the manse however there will still be a shortfall of around £15K for these planned improvements as well as the usual £20K of annual expenditure in this fund.

United Appeal

The United Appeal for Mission is at the very heart of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Every aspect of the Church's mission depends to some extent on United Appeal. It supports projects, programmes and staff at home and overseas. It helps congregations and individuals to build God's Kingdom through youth and children's ministry, social action and the training of leaders, for example.

It also supports the production of different resources that encourages people to grow in their faith as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, so the Good News of the Gospel can be shared.

United Appeal is a huge ministry showing God's love in action to hundreds of thousands of people through the generosity and sacrificial giving of Presbyterians from across Ireland. As a result, we can do more together than we could ever do on our own.

Our target of honour is £12K and for the past 2 years we have been in a position where the income to this fund has met the target and we have not needed to top up this appeal from freewill offering. Currently, there is a balance of £6K in this fund which leaves a shortfall of £6K to be raised by the end of December. If you have not already donated to the United Appeal, I would encourage you to donate before the end of the year and help to fund this wonderful ministry which reaches out to people beyond the doors of Stormont Presbyterian.

Investments

Over the past number of years we had invested some legacy funds in shares. These shares were low risk investments which performed well and produced monthly dividends. An initial block of investments was sold and this money (£22K) is to be placed in a savings account and used for the improvements of the manse. A decision was made that the market was becoming too uncertain with Brexit, US election and Covid, and the remaining shares were sold at the start of November. This sale released a further £46K. £10K of this will be placed in our current account to help with operating costs and the remaining £36K will be placed in a savings account ringfenced as church reserves in line with charity commission recommendations.

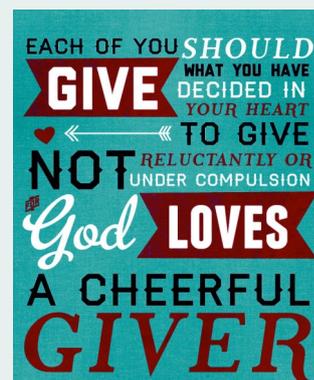
Thank you for taking the time to read this update and I would encourage you to read 2 Corinthians chapters 8 & 9 where Paul speaks to Christians about the call to generous giving.

Love in the Lord

Alison Wilson

Treasurer

07845 148198



OUR BUILDINGS

An update on what has been done, what is happening and what is planned.

As you may know, a fire in September 2019 badly damaged our kitchen. While it has taken longer than expected, the work is nearing completion. In the meantime, we had a number of leaks in the church roof and this, along with other essential maintenance work, has been completed; including installing a new heating boiler for Kirk Cara and the Family Room.

While preparing for the return to worship in church, we took the opportunity to consider what other improvements we could make to further our church mission. In the absence of being able to see all this at the moment we thought we should update you by providing this short report.

The Kitchen

The replacement kitchen is now almost complete. The layout and facilities have been improved thanks to a lot of hard work by Pat, Avril and Arthur. Hopefully, we will soon be able to make use of it.

The Thornhill Room

This room was smoke-damaged and our insurance covered the cost of cleaning and repainting. We plan to make much more use of this room in the future; holding Fellowship Time on Sunday mornings and on other occasions, internal and external meetings and JAM. The floor has been cleaned and new lighting installed.

The Stained Glass Windows

The new lighting in the Thornhill Room has improved the visibility of the stained glass windows.

Vestibule Toilet

As there was no hot water supply to either of the vestibule toilets, they did not meet current standards. As we planned for the re-opening of church, it was essential that we are totally compliant with all the regulations and requirements. We have therefore totally refurbished the larger, female toilet and changed it into a shared facility and closed the existing male toilet. This work included a new toilet and wash-hand basin, water heater, ventilator, lighting and redecoration.

The Family Room

This room had been recently redecorated and is an excellent space. The small kitchen/servery required some upgrading; a new water heater has been installed, the doors of the units replaced and a new small fridge will be installed.

The Main Hall

The floor has been refurbished and at some point we would like to put

additional storage in the servery, along with a new floor.

Bible Text

A big "Thank You!" to Mariann and Niamh for providing some beautiful text on the wall at the entrance to the Park Hall

The Internet

A really big "Thank You!" to Donald and Barbara Hume for all the time, effort and materials they have given to provide a major upgrade to the Wi-Fi network within the buildings, including the Sanctuary.

New Boiler

There are two separate systems; the main one which heats the Sanctuary and the Main Hall, was upgraded a few years ago, and a second one, which heats Kirk Cara and the newer rooms, was failing and has had to be replaced.

The Foyer

This is the most public space, the main entry point to the church buildings during the week. The space has been repainted, new lighting installed and the floor replaced. New signage is planned along with a small library unit and holder for leaflets.

The Church Roof

You may recall a number of leaks in the roof of the Sanctuary during February. Emergency repair work has been completed along with maintenance upgrades to the gullies and flat roofs. A survey of the roof identified further planned repair work will be required to the flat roof.

External Works

You may have noticed that the large pine tree at the front of the Main Hall has been removed. To off-set this loss and some of our carbon footprint, we are arranging tree planting alongside the Comber Greenway. We have tidied up and cleaned the hard surfaces and planted areas around the church. Other work in the future includes a new Notice Board and a review / upgrade of the external lighting.

THE MANSE

A detailed survey of the Manse (which is now 25 years old), identified a number of items that require attention. This includes the replacement of a number of double-glazing units, the front and back doors and new internal doors downstairs.

Arthur Robinson carried out a detailed inspection of the kitchen and utility room and reported that they are in very poor condition, with numerous faults. In view of the cost involved in dealing with existing faults it would be sensible to replace the kitchen and utility room. An initial design has been prepared and outline costs provided. The work is scheduled for replacement in March '21.



STOREHOUSE

Now that we have entered November, Storehouse have started planning for their Christmas hamper Appeal. Given the year we've had, they envisage it being busier than normal, so they are planning to put together more hampers than ever before.

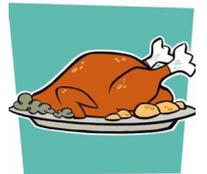
Not only that, but they will also be trying to put them all together whilst maintaining social distancing and safe practice at their warehouse! The congregation at Stormont has always been extremely generous in supporting the hamper appeal and this year we are asking for your help again. The specific item we have been asked to collect this year for inclusion in the hampers is bottles of Shloer.

Donations can be brought to either of the regular weekly services and left in the Storehouse crates in the vestibule.

Alternatively, donations will be accepted at the church on Wednesday 2nd December and Thursday 3rd December 10:00 – 11:00am. This will be a “drive through” arrangement in the church car park where someone will receive your donations, there will be no need to enter the church building.

The final date for accepting donations will be Sunday 13th December

As well as donating for the Storehouse Christmas Hampers you can also contribute to their sponsor a Turkey campaign. Please consider donating £10 to buy a turkey for a needy family in Belfast. You can either do that by making a donation via the website (<https://www.give.net/sponsoraturkey2020>), by placing your donation in the offering box at either weekly service (please clearly marked your envelope ‘Storehouse Turkey Appeal’) or forward your donation to the church office.



*“Let us remember that the Christmas heart is a giving heart.
A wide open heart that thinks of others first.”*

BELFAST CITY MISSION CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2020

Normally at this time of year Belfast City Mission launch their annual “Toy Appeal” to Churches across the province. Over the years Stormont Presbyterian has been very generous in providing for needy families in Belfast. However, due to current restrictions and safety issues BCM are not in a position to accept toys this year. We know this will be a huge disappointment to the families which rely on these gifts for Christmas.

In the light of this, BCM are suggesting alternative donations of selection boxes. If you still wish to give to the invaluable work of BCM arrangements are the same as for Storehouse. Please bring your selection boxes to either of the regular weekly services and leave in the BCM crate in the vestibule.

Alternatively, donations will be accepted at the church on Wednesday 2nd December and Thursday 3rd December 10:00 – 11:00am. This will be a “drive through” arrangement in the church car park where someone will receive your donations, there will be no need to enter the church building.

The final date for accepting donations will be Sunday 13th December



Bereavements

We would ask you to remember the family and friends of all who have been bereaved in recent days especially the family and friends of:



Mrs	May	McAnoy	32 Cabinhill Park, BELFAST	05/03/2020
Mrs	Annie	Robinson	111 Abbey Park, BELFAST	29/03/2020
Mrs	Gena	Lemon	14 Cabinhill Mews, BELFAST	25/04/2020
Mrs	Thelma	Bateman	7 Priory Manor, HOLYWOOD	16/06/2020
Mrs	Jeanette	Thompson	21 Donegall Avenue, CARRICKFEGUS	21/07/2020
Mr	Arthur	Newberry	Maryland Healthcare Home, BELFAST	09/08/2020
Mr	Ron	Campbell	2B Summerhill Avenue, BELFAST	01/10/2020
Mrs	Mary	Johnston	26 Ascot Park, BELFAST	03/11/2020
Capt	John	Coates	7 Cloverhill Park, BELFAST	2020

Stormont Presbyterian Church, 618 Upper Newtownards Road, BELFAST, BT4 3HH - Registered Charity in NI (NIC104334)

Rev Albin Rankin, Minister Phone: 90656642 ext. 21, Mob: 07740580295 Email: albin@stormontchurch.org

The Church Office Phone: 90656642 ext. 20, Email: office@stormontchurch.org

Church website: www.stormontchurch.org

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/stormontchurch>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stormontchurch>