



Minister:	Rev Michael Davidson	t: 02892 667010	e: <a href="mailto:mdavidson@presbyterianireland.org">mdavidson@presbyterianireland.org</a>
Deaconess:	Heidi England	t: 	e: <a href="mailto:heidi@railwaystreet.org">heidi@railwaystreet.org</a>
Youth Worker:	Hannah Craig	t: 	e: <a href="mailto:hannah@railwaystreet.org">hannah@railwaystreet.org</a>
Church Office:	9.30am - 12.30pm	Tue/Wed/Thu	t: 028 9260 2766 e: <a href="mailto:office@railwaystreet.org">office@railwaystreet.org</a>



Dear Friends,

Though a year has past, in some ways it seems we are back where we found ourselves last December. As I was writing the letter for the December 2020 bulletin the newspapers were filled with headlines like, '3 Weeks to save Christmas'



A year later and this is the type of headline we are seeing on 29<sup>th</sup> November. Fear is rising again as we hear of the increasing levels of Covid 19 infections, of hospitals under intense pressure, new lockdowns across Europe and above all the media driven panic at the news of the new 'Omicron Variant.'

Once again fear and uncertainty are in the ascendant as the hope that we were getting out of this pandemic once again fades. A year ago, we were being told that vaccinations were our way out of this. What happened to that hope? When will this finally end? And where in the mist of all this can true hope be found?

Hope was a rare commodity in the early years of the first century AD in Judea. The Jews had once again lost their independence, this time to the Romans, and Judea was now a province of the Roman Empire. The Jews bitterly resented having to pay taxes to Caesar. Judea was ruled in Rome's name by a

client king known as Herod the Great - certainly his ruthlessness, casual violence and paranoia were very great. Though he ruled over the Jews he was not a Jewish king, His father was by descent an Edomite (a descendent of Jacob's twin brother - Esau) whose ancestors had converted to Judaism. He was king not because of who he was but because of whom he knew in the Roman Emperor's court. He was neither loved nor respected by his Jewish subjects.

What gave the Jews hope in the midst of the gloom and darkness of their present circumstances? It was the hope of what God had promised them, the hope of a Messiah, a king of David's line who would save them. They were eagerly looking towards the fulfilment of that promise and clung to prophecies like that of Isaiah 9:

**'The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.'**

And Isaiah 42: **"Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope."**

We want to focus our hearts and minds on the reason for the hope that we have and that hope has a name – it is Jesus Christ. At Christmas we proclaim the message that Jesus is the hope of the world, not governments, not human leaders or princes, not vaccines, nor covid passports, but Jesus. We want to celebrate the love of God for a fallen world and for lost sinners

that saw him send His only Son into the world to bring light and hope, dispelling our darkness and saving us from the mess that we have got ourselves into.

We will have our usual mix of Christmas services (though still sadly curtailed to some degree by ongoing covid restrictions.) We will have had our **Christmas Gift Service on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December**, our annual **Carols by Candlelight Service** will be on **19<sup>th</sup> December at 6:30pm** and this will, of necessity, once again be a hybrid service containing both live and pre-recorded elements. There will be family services on **Christmas Day and Boxing Day at 10:30am** and this year throughout the period of Advent we will be following Matthew's account of events surrounding the nativity.

I'm sure that we all know friends or neighbours who feel weighed down by the constant darkness and gloom we are bombarded with these days - people who are looking for hope. Why not invite them to come and hear the message of Good News about Jesus, the hope of the world. Offer them the light of the gospel to replace the darkness of our society. There is no better Christmas present you could give them than to invite them to hear of the difference that Jesus makes and the sure and certain hope that he offers.

I trust that you will all know a hope-filled Christmas and my prayer for you is, ***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."***  
Romans 15:13

Yours in Christ

Michael Davidson





# RAILWAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## Kirk Session News

### **Beginners' Church**

The Kirk Session wants to thank Hilary Milligan for her service as the leader of Railway Street Beginners' Church. She was appointed to this position in 2012. Hilary brought her usual commitment, enthusiasm and meticulous preparation to this position. We want to also acknowledge that she is now showing those same qualities as the co-ordinator of our new Girls' Brigade Company.

Kirk Session are pleased to announce the appointment of Sophie Blythe as the new leader of Beginners' Church.

### **Clerk of Session**

Back at the Kirk Session Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> September Roger Thompson indicated his desire to retire from his position as our Clerk of Session at the end of 2021.

Roger was appointed to this position by the Kirk Session on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Clerk of Session is an important position in the life of the church. Being Clerk of Session goes way beyond simply taking the minutes at Kirk Session meetings, which Roger always did meticulously. It also involves many other practical duties such as dealing with correspondence, keeping the elders informed of pastoral and practical matters on a regular basis, organising the rota for elders serving at communion, readers for the Christmas Carol Service, writing the summary of the congregation's life each year for the annual report, attending staff meetings and being a close confident and adviser to the minister. In addition Roger carried additional responsibilities and burdens during what was a fairly long vacancy between 2013-2015.

Roger has fulfilled his role with his customary grace, enthusiasm, diligence and good humour. We thank him for his service which he has willingly and cheerfully given as a servant of the church and the Lord of his life - Jesus Christ.

Michael, our minister, wishes to put on record his personal thanks to Roger and Lis for their welcome to himself and the whole Manse family after he accepted the call to Railway Street and to thank Roger for his friendship, encouragement and wisdom which Michael has really appreciated and valued.

At its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November the Kirk Session unanimously elected Stephen Johnston to succeed Roger as our Clerk of Session from January 2022.

## Services for December & January



### **5<sup>th</sup> December**

**10:30am** Christmas Gift Family Service –  
Matthew Kelso (Assistant, Sloan Street Presbyterian Church)

### **12<sup>th</sup> December**

**10:30am** Matthew 1:1-17 – Charlie Hadjiev

### **19<sup>th</sup> December**

**10:30am** Matthew 1:18-25 – Michael Davidson

**6:30pm** Carols by Candlelight Service  
Stephen Woods

### **25<sup>th</sup> December**

**10:30am Christmas Day Family Service**  
Michael Davidson

### **26<sup>th</sup> December**

**10:30am Boxing Day Family Service**  
Matthew 2:1-12 - Michael Davidson

### **2<sup>nd</sup> January**

**10:30am** Matthew 2:13-23  
Michael Davidson

## **New Series For Winter 2022**

Mornings

***‘Strangers in A Strange Land’ - Studies in Daniel - Michael Davidson***

***‘A Great Salvation’ - Studies in Hebrews - Charlie Hadjiev***

Evenings

***‘Paul & Barnabas - Mission Possible’ Acts 13 &14***

**9<sup>th</sup> January**

10:30am ‘When the World Does Its Worst’ Daniel 1  
Michael Davidson

6:30pm ‘Mission to Cyprus – Sun, Sand & Salvation’ Acts 13:1-12  
Stephen Johnston

**16<sup>th</sup> January**

10:30am ‘The Superiority of the Son of God’ Hebrews 1: 1-24  
Charlie Hadjiev

**23<sup>rd</sup> January**

10:30am ‘The Dreams Of A King’ Daniel 2:1-23  
Michael Davidson

6:30pm ‘Christ Centred Preaching’ Acts 13:13-51  
Michael Davidson

**30<sup>th</sup> January**

10:30am ‘Free From the Fear of Death’ Hebrews 2: 5-18  
Charlie Hadjiev **(COMMUNION)**

**Do please remember if you are planning to attend to register at  
[attend.railwaystreet.org](http://attend.railwaystreet.org)**

**Watch online at [www.railwaystreet.org](http://www.railwaystreet.org)  
Telephone Line Service – 028 92448979**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

### **DEATHS**

It is with great sadness we record the following deaths:

Mrs Dorothy Anne Clarke on 27<sup>th</sup> October

Mr Frank Hutchinson on 1<sup>st</sup> November

Mr Mark Raymond Spence on 4<sup>th</sup> November

Mrs Marlene (Martha) Balmer on 6<sup>th</sup> November

Mr Robert (Bobby) Morrison on 12<sup>th</sup> November

The Very Rev Dr Samuel Hutchinson on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

The congregation extend their sympathy and prayers to all the families at this time of loss.

### **BAPTISMS**

The church family rejoice with the families of :

Ryan and Hollie McCall on the Baptism of their son Freddie on 7<sup>th</sup> November and

Robert and Joe Crawford on the Baptism of their son Jordan on 21<sup>st</sup> November.

### **CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR PASTORAL COVER:**

Michael will be on call over the Christmas and New Year period.

He will then be away from Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> – Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January.

The minister on call during this time will be Rev Adrian McLernon

028 90826586

**CHURCH OFFICE** will close on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December reopening on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January.



### **CHRISTMAS GIFT SERVICE – SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER**

Over the past number of years Congregations from across the Province, including Railway Street, have generously supported the Belfast City Mission's annual Christmas

Appeal for children and teenagers in needy families. Last

year the Mission decided to change the Appeal because of Covid so, instead of asking for toys, they opted for alternative gifts such as gift cards (to be used to purchase toys), monetary contributions and selection boxes.

Although the Mission were initially unsure if this would work, the response was truly amazing and many more children than ever before were able to be helped. The feedback from Churches and Missionaries was overwhelmingly



positive and therefore it was decided to continue with the same approach for this year.

Gift suggestions (unwrapped please) in order of preference are:-

- Gift Cards (£5, £10, £15, £20) from Toy Stores eg., Smyths, Argos etc.
- Monetary donations (or by cheque/P.O made payable to Belfast City Mission)
- Selection Boxes

**You are warmly invited to bring your gifts to the morning service on the above date and we are planning for children to be able to bring their gifts forward during the service to place them at the Christmas tree.**

The staff of the City Mission expresses sincere thanks and appreciation to you in anticipation of your help in supporting this year's Appeal for needy young people.

**KIRK SESSION MEETING:** The next business meeting will be held on **Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 at 7.30pm** in the church building.



### **PRAYER FOCUS**

**Luke 11:1. "Lord, teach us to pray."**

As we come to the end of 2021 and move into 2022 let us spend some time together in prayer to thank God for the many blessings received during 2021, the comfort given in times of stress and to ask for guidance as a whole new year stretches out before us.

**We plan to meet on**

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> December from 8.00-9.00pm in no 31 &**

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January from 8.00-9.00pm in no 31**

Please put these dates in your diary and come along to experience these times of corporate prayer.



PW will meet on **Monday 24th January 2022** at 8pm in the main hall. *"Dusty Shoes: working with refugees in Nicosia"*

The speaker is Daphne Wilson, a retired local schoolteacher, who volunteered with Refugee Support Europe during February/March 2020 just prior to lockdown.

All ladies of the congregation are very welcome. The meeting will take place according to the guidelines in place at that time.

### **WIDER WORLD**

Next year it is intended that the magazine will return to its usual size, bringing you the normal range of good articles and PW news to enjoy.

Therefore, now is the time to renew your annual subscription which is £6 for four issues. This can be put in an envelope with your name and marked 'WIDER WORLD' and placed in a box on the table in the church vestibule. It would be appreciated if you could do this as soon as possible.



We hope to meet in our own Main Hall, for our Christmas meeting on **Thursday 30th December**. We will have an extended meeting, from 2.30pm to 4.00pm and hope to include tea and Christmas goodies.

Plans for 2022 remain flexible but we hope to meet on **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January** at 2.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

### **BIBLE DISCOVERY GROUP**

There will be no further meetings in 2021. We plan to resume on **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022** at 10.30am in No 31.

**PRESBYTERIAN HERALD:** it is planned for 10 issues of the Herald to be produced in 2022 with a subscription of £15. Anyone who does not already receive the Presbyterian Herald and would like to order it for 2022, please leave your name with Angela in the Church office.

## **GIRLS' BRIGADE**



Our GB is continuing to thrive with a current membership of 43 girls aged 3-14 enjoying their weekly programme of Scripture, games, craft, skills, stories, songs, sport and baking. Each week new friendships are made and existing ones strengthened. The programme is based on 4 key elements of Physical, Spiritual, Educational and Social and always includes great fun!



### **Fire Safety**



One evening, our church Fire Safety Officer, Jonny McBurney, came along to each section and taught the girls about fire safety in the home. He did his best to try to recruit some new firefighters aka GB leaders Rebecca and Sarah.



## Remembrance Day

The girls took time to reflect on the meaning of Remembrance Day and, for the first time, 2 of our older members, alongside 2 BB boys, provided an escort for the wreaths being laid in church.




## Christmas 🎄 🧑

Our Christmas party evening will be Thursday 16th December. We will then take a break during the holiday season and restart on Thursday 13th January 2022.

## Uniforms

It is great to see all our girls in their GB uniforms each week. We are trying to establish a second hand uniform shop and will happily accept second hand GB jumpers (red or blue) and navy tunics. Please pass on to any GB leader.



If you know of any girls who are interested in joining our GB, please contact Hilary Milligan 



## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY



Thank you to all who donated items for the Lisburn Foodbank Christmas Hampers. 91 tins of ham, 137 tins of fruit and 124 tubs of sweets were collected.

Thank you also to the team of helpers from RSPC who sorted and delivered our contributions to the foodbank.



In addition to your generous donations to Lisburn Foodbank we also want to thank all those who filled shoeboxes for Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child. Linda & Hannah delivered 60 of these to the local collection point.



## END OF YEAR FINANCIAL MATTERS

We are very grateful for the continued generous giving by our Church family during 2021. As we come to the end of the year this is a reminder that to be included in the 2021 Annual Financial Report,

**Contributions to FWO, United Appeal, Link/Property Accounts  
and all other funds should be forwarded to church by  
SUNDAY 2nd JANUARY 2022.**

**N.B.** *Any donations received after this date will be included in the year 2022 Report.*

- Members can contribute via the FWO packs
- Direct Debit via your bank to funds
- Annual contributions by cheque to funds

**Railway Street Presbyterian Church - bank details are:**

**Danske Bank, 62-66 Bow Street Lisburn. BT28 1YS**

**Free Will Offering :** Church No 1 Account - 95 03 61 - 91026178

**United Appeal/Sundry Collections :**

Church No 1 Account - 95 03 61 - 91026178

**Link Refurbishment & Property :**

Church No 6 Account - 95 03 61 - 61042858

We are aware many members are still unable to come to worship in person and contributions can be forwarded to:

**Church Treasurer:** *Mr Stephen R Johnston*

**FWO/Gift Aid Secretary :** *Miss Edith V McConnell*

If you have any questions in relation to giving to our church, please contact either our Treasurer or FWO/Gift Aid Secretary.

If you are the treasurer of one of our organisations, can you please ensure that your accounts for 2021 are submitted to our Treasurer by **20 January 2022** at the latest to ensure that the draft Church Accounts are ready for our external auditors by the end of January 2022.





## Link Summary update

Work is still continuing to progress well, and we have now held our third Link progress meeting.

The main demolition work to the existing Link area has now been completed with the temporary propping underway on the wall areas that need to be retained. It is planned to commence the ground piling work soon which will be followed by structural steel manufacture and erection.

In the minor hall area, the soft strip is well underway, the old kitchen has been stripped out, the hall ceiling lights and the ceiling tiles have also been removed.





In terms of the financial side of the Link Development the first two stage payments to the contractors have been made in line with the contract. We are very grateful for the ongoing generous giving of our church family and with more than £200,000 currently in the Link Development Account we will not need to start using our bank loan facility until well into 2022. We have also had several meetings with potential grant providers and are hopeful of decisions on our applications in the New Year. Thank you for all your ongoing financial support.

Ivan Woods & Stephen Johnston



Artist's impression of the new link.



A picture of a welcome area in Streaton Presbyterian Church, Newtownards, similar to the one we hope to have.



The exterior of the Link building at Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church.



The 2021 Appeal is entitled **‘Weathering the Storm’**. For many in the world, the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to wreak havoc for years to come. Combined with a changing climate, and the increased uncertainty and extreme weather events which that brings, millions face a very real threat: a perfect storm of covid and climate. As creation groans, so many communities are struggling to sustain even the most basic of livelihoods, fighting hard to provide for their families and loved ones.

Over the summer of 2021, Ethiopia has been impacted by a severe drought creating near famine conditions compounded by conflict in some areas. In Haiti a large earthquake resulted in a tragic loss of life and many damaged homes.

Both of these emergencies have been made even more devastating and dangerous because of the ongoing challenge of both covid and climate change. By God’s grace, through this year’s Appeal we hope to support those who have moved past the immediate urgent need, to a situation where ongoing sustainable development is making a difference to the lives of many.





### **Ways to Give:**

- World Development Appeal envelopes will be available from Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December in the Meeting House and from the church office. They can be returned on Sundays up to 2<sup>nd</sup> January.
- You can also put a gift in a plain envelope and write on it, 'World Development Appeal' and include your FWO number and leave it into the church office or put it through the nominated letter boxes by Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> January.
- Or you can contribute by bank transfer; the details are: -  
Sort code: 950361 Account: 91026178  
Please use your FWO number and WDA as the reference.

## UPDATED COVID-19 GUIDELINES

**From the Clerk of the General Assembly  
Rev Trevor Gribben**



Dear Colleagues,

I write today following on from our most recent engagement with officials regarding necessary measures to minimise and mitigate risk in relation to Covid-19. As you will be aware, the Northern Ireland Executive has emphasised the need for everyone to take particular care, especially over the current period, so that it will not prove necessary to bring in more stringent restrictions in a few

weeks' time. We have discussed our current mitigations and easements with officials and it has been recognised that PCI, in line with the other main churches, has kept in place some wise mitigations, which though not required in law, are "*.... **both** for the safety and assurance of all who attend services and meetings in PCI congregations **and also** to help avoid any potential requirement for proof of vaccination to attend church services and meetings, which would be unacceptable to the Church.*"

However, in light of the current heightened risk of spread of the Covid-19 virus and having consulted with the Moderator and Convener of the General Council, and in line with delegated authority from the General Council, **it has been agreed that the following change to the guidance and/or requirements issued on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021, should apply to all PCI congregations in Northern Ireland, with immediate effect:**

### **Services of Worship:**

During all services of worship in PCI congregations everyone aged 13 and over, apart from those exempted, must continue to wear face coverings on entry and exit **and now also during the entire service**, apart from when leading from the front i.e. face coverings should no longer be removed when seated at a service of worship. This includes funeral services and wedding services, in the latter case the bridal party are exempt, but should be wise in relation to social distancing.

- This slight tightening of restrictions in regard to face coverings, while obviously regrettable, is necessary at this time on the strong recommendation of health officials, and is now required by PCI.
- This slight tightening of restrictions however does not apply at present to bible study groups and prayer meetings, where because of smaller numbers, face coverings can continue to be removed once seated, apart from when singing.

**Please also note the following additional information:**

- **Pastoral Visiting:** Additional care should be exercised in pastoral visiting, with necessary precautions taken, especially when visiting with vulnerable people. Indeed, routine pastoral visiting should not be seen as a priority in the incoming weeks, especially visiting that takes a minister, elder or pastoral visitor from one house to another in a short period of time. When visiting in hospitals and care homes, the advice and direction of the relevant people in charge should be sought and followed.





**SUNDAYS AT RAILWAY STREET**  
**10.30am**

**MORNING SERVICE**  
**BEGINNERS CHURCH - MAIN HALL**  
**KIDS CHURCH - No. 31**  
**YOUTH CHURCH - Brownlee Room**

to attend please register at:  
[www.railwaystreet.org](http://www.railwaystreet.org)  
*Service will be live streamed.*

FOR UNTO US  
*a child is born,*  
**unto us a son is given:**  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:  
*and his name shall be called*  
**★ WONDERFUL ★**  
**COUNSELLOR,**  
**THE MIGHTY GOD,**  
*The everlasting Father,*  
**THE PRINCE OF PEACE.**

Isaiah 9:6