

The Light

Issue 227

Dec 2019



Christmas Tree
Festival



Matthew
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Verses 31-33

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Why Shepherds?

Doing the Surf Project Together

Farm Supplier of the Year

Alan Craig talks to the Editor

Introducing Ashleigh O'Sullivan



THE MAGAZINE OF THE LISBURN AND DROMORE METHODIST CIRCUIT

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*Cover Photo: Alicia Spence with
mini- loaves baked in Seymour
Street. See page 21*

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If you have material or photos for the next
edition of the Light please send them to the
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representative by Sunday 2nd February 2020

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Why the Shepherds?

Rev David Turtle

And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. Luke 2:8-9



As we enter the weeks of Advent and Christmas we may have many thoughts and feelings about this season. We may have many questions about why it is celebrated when it is; or why it is celebrated in the way it is! Ultimately, we might ask ourselves, why does Christmas exist at all? Why would God ever even consider stepping into human history and taking the form of a baby?

Perhaps one question we may not immediately ask ourselves is this. If you were God, and could announce the arrival of this Saviour of the world in any way you wanted, would you send your messengers to some shepherds out in the fields in the middle of the night? Why not the religious leaders in Jerusalem; or King Herod; or Emperor Caesar?

Yet God chose the shepherds. Not people at the top of the social ladder. Not people who were highly regarded but those who smelt like the animals they cared for!

Around 1,000 years before the angels appeared to these shepherds, David, the "shepherd-king" of Israel, had cared for his people, just as he had cared for sheep when he was a boy shepherd in the fields outside Bethlehem. David was able to write the words of Psalm 23, because he knew what it meant to be a good shepherd, and he knew that God was his good shepherd.

We know so well the words he wrote: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters" (vs. 1-2). He

goes on to speak of how the Lord guides and protects with his rod and staff.

Jesus, the descendant of David, came to be the true good shepherd. In John 10:14-15, Jesus said that he knows us as his sheep, and we are to know him. He promises to defend us from wolves, and not run away. But most importantly, he said that the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. On the night Jesus was born, his journey to the cross when he would lay down his life for the world, began. As He ministered during his days on earth, he constantly revealed that he was truly the Good Shepherd. So as God chose a way to reveal the news that his Son had come to earth; the Shepherd who was 'God with us', he picked the most appropriate people to inform! He shared that message with shepherds in Bethlehem; those who understood feeding, guiding and saving.

As they came and celebrated the birth of the Shepherd who would feed, guide and provide salvation for each one of us, they gave us an insight into the ways of our God. The God who so often chooses the weak, rather than the strong; who goes to those on the margins, rather than those who command power and influence.

In this season, as those who are his hands and feet, may God open our eyes to see two things: that he is able to use each one of us for his purposes, regardless of how weak and powerless we may feel; and that this same Saviour calls us to go to those on the margins of our society and our world to share the undeserved love of the One who is the Good Shepherd. ●

Doing Life Together with the Surf Project



A report by Glyn Capper

Doing Life Together

Over the past year, the Seymour Street church family has been 'Doing Life Together' as we seek to grow closer to each other and be more intentional about helping each other grow in our faith.

We had a number of events in 2018, including a church weekend to the Lodge Hotel in Coleraine, a bus trip to Newcastle after a Sunday morning service and an Advent lunch with stew, mince pies and an advent calendar for each family to take home. In the Spring of 2019, we began a session of 'Life Groups', with folk meeting in homes and in church to share, study and pray.

To kick off a new church session 'Doing Life Together' this year, we had a different sort of Sunday on 29th September!



The Surf Project comes to Lisburn

The 'Surf Project' [find out more at www.the-surfproject.org] came to Lisburn where Jono Griffen, its founder, and two of his team - Lily Jones from the USA and Banabas Chey

from Cambodia - led our Sunday morning worship at the slightly earlier time of 10am.

Lisburn goes to the Surf Project

After the service, 140 people of all ages either boarded a coach or travelled by car to the North Coast where the Surf Project hosted us at their base in Portrush Methodist Church.

After eating our packed lunches, over 60 men, women and children changed into wetsuits and headed to the West Strand for surfing lessons and beach games with the Surf Project! Others had a more leisurely afternoon, with a stroll around Portrush or a walk to the beach to watch the surfing.

In the evening, we gathered back in Portrush Methodist for a meal provided by the Surf Project. This was one of the highlights of the day - the Surf Project team exceeded all expectations and provided a choice of three excellent hot meals followed by dessert! And to finish off, we gathered in Portrush Methodist Church to have a short



time of worship and see some photos of the day before making the trip home.

What did the day achieve?

The day was an opportunity to do many things. We learnt about the brilliant, innovative work of the Surf Project as they encourage, challenge and nurture young people across Ireland and beyond through events and surf camps. And it was good to see at first-hand how professionally they go about that work. For some, there was an opportunity to learn how to surf for the first time and for others (though not too many!) there was an opportunity to refine their surfing skills.



But, most importantly, the day was an opportunity to do life together - as we caught up with old friends and made new ones, enjoyed each other's company on the coach or car journey, helped each other in and out of wetsuits, had a walk together or chatted over dinner. Hopefully, in all those things, we grew closer to each other and as a church family, making it easier to help each other grow in our faith.

Life Groups

And our day together also set us up well for an autumn series of 'Life Groups' with around 100 folk meeting together each week in people's homes or in church to continue our journey of 'Doing Life Together'. ●



5 Some thoughts from those who came:

"The trip for me was great because as a church family we got to share in an entire day of fun and fellowship. It gave our entire community a real buzz and it was so nice to just 'do life' with the great people you sadly only get to see on a Sunday. Hopefully many more to come in the not too distant future!"



"It was a wonderful day of fellowship with each other young and old and more importantly fellowship with God as we worshipped together."

"A wonderful day of adventure on the waves, brilliantly facilitated by the Surf Project. Connecting with others in the congregation was a real joy, helping realise the truth of church as family."



"Even though we didn't go surfing it was amazing to watch those who took part. During the day there were so many opportunities to chat to people we might not usually chat with. The whole day had a great sense of FAMILY and we thoroughly enjoyed it from start to finish!"

Priesthill Update

On Sunday 5th May a huge congregation gathered in Priesthill to pay its respects to the memory of Colin Fullerton. Colin had died very suddenly earlier that week at the tragically early age of 64. Colin had played a very important role in the life of the Priesthill congregation, particularly in handling its financial affairs. He is greatly missed by all his friends in the Church. He is particularly missed, of course, by his wife Linda and brother Archie.

On Sunday 14th July the families and friends of Nicole Laffin and David Johnston gathered to witness the wedding of these two young people. It was a very happy occasion and the folk in Priesthill wish them every blessing in their future married life. *(The Editor apologises as these items should have been in the September Light.)*

The Parables of the Yeast and the Mustard Seed

as expounded by Richard Wright

6

At a recent Seymour Street morning service Richard Wright, in characteristic style, enlisted the help of the children, his wife and family, several members of the congregation, the Men's Choir, Shirley Carrington and even Sheila and Tom Millar, to expound the Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast to a somewhat bemused congregation, not to mention the untold millions watching the live stream on Facebook.

At the start of the service the children shaped mini-loaves from leavened dough, pre-prepared to avoid destroying the church carpet and giving Roy, the caretaker, a heart attack! Through a video link we saw the loaves placed in the ovens in the church kitchen.

Meanwhile back in the church a challenge to grow sunflower plants from seed at Richard's last Service purported to have resulted in

three sunflower plants which were expertly judged by Sheila and Tom Millar. The clear winner was Elaine Kinghan's plant but Shirley was found to have cheated as her 'perfect' plant was not found to be real - even though it had been bought in Dobbies!

After the praise pieces by the Men's Choir the arrival back of the mini-loaves wafted the scent of freshly baked bread through the church and allowed Richard the opportunity to share the message that we need to allow the true seed of the Kingdom of Heaven to grow in our lives and that with Jesus in our lives we can become the leaven working for good in our community.

Well done to Richard for a well thought through and highly original Service, and apologies to anyone watching online who was not sure if it was a Seymour Street Service or The Great British Bake Off! 🍞



George Megarry

Farm Supplier of the year 2019

George Megarry won supplier for the year award at the prestigious Farmers Weekly annual award ceremony in London in October. The Megarry family has a long association with Priesthill (Zion) Methodist Church and George is the organist there.

George is the director of TGM Software Solutions Ltd, Hillsborough and has been supplying farming software solutions around the world for the last 25 years. He was nominated by sheep breeders Roger and Hilary Bell from Co Antrim who have been using his sheep software package for a number of years. This has driven improvements in their sheep flock performance due to the robust detailed information provided by the software package. Every sheep is identified by an electronic chip in an ear tag. Every lamb is recorded at birth into the package and health treatments, illnesses, weight performance and other management data are recorded during the lifetime of the lamb, enabled informed breeding decisions and management decisions to be taken.

George says he was surprised first of all to be nominated and then to win the award, as there were 5 nominees for this category from across the UK.

George puts this success in this area down to treating his customers as friends to be supported and helped rather than as customers from whom to



George Megarry (2nd from left) receiving his award.
Photo, copyright, Farmers' Weekly

make a profit. George supplies software systems to many countries including Ireland, UK, Latvia, Estonia, Turkey, USA, Canada, Qatar, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Australia, New Zealand and many others. At all times, His view is that a Christian business owner must hold his or her witness above all other considerations. His customers are from many religions and none. A Christian business person's actions to his or her customers and clients must match up to his or her stated Christian faith and principles. Integrity, honesty, reliability and going the extra mile when needed to help a customer out who is in trouble, are pointers to the Christian faith of the business owner.

This is the principle which George holds to in his business. Many times it means he may work for little or no profit providing a particular service to a customer, but George says 'What is more important, your witness or your profit?' For many of his customers contact with him may be the customer's first contact with a Christian. George says we need to remember that Jesus himself was a carpenter and worked in the carpenter's shop with Joseph. What sort of service did Jesus provide before he began to



Let's all aim to be supplier of the year, neighbour of the year, employee of the year, son, daughter, mother, father, friend of the year!

preach and teach. What quality was his work? What about the customer who brought back a table with a wobbly leg? Did he fix it free of charge, or did he tell the customer he should have been more careful. It's a pity that the gospels don't record any instances of Jesus' early life in the carpenters shop, but he gives us clear instructions on how we ought to conduct our businesses:

LUKE 6:31 *'Do to others as you would have them do to you.'*

The bible is full of many references on how we should interact with others:

HEBREWS 13:16 *'And do not forget to do good and to share with others'*

COLOSSIANS 3:23 *'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters'*

COLOSSIANS 3:17 *'And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.'*

So let's all aim to be supplier of the year, neighbour of the year, employee of the year, son, daughter, mother, father, friend of the year ... Whatever we find ourselves doing this week, may we do it all in the name of Jesus, so people may see our spoken faith and witness being lived out in our daily lives and be brought to know the Saviour, the one who died for us, while we were yet sinners.

Some of those we meet may not deserve the kindness we can give them - they may be rude, they may be arrogant, but then we didn't deserve our salvation! We were arrogant, we were rebellious, there was a time when we didn't accept Jesus as Lord, but when we trusted him for our salvation, our sins were all forgiven, not because we deserved it, but because God had mercy! - The punishment for our sins was taken by the Lord Jesus on our behalf! Let's treat those we meet each day, the way God in Christ treats us, and if anyone reading this has not yet discovered the forgiveness of sins through the mercy of God through the Lord Jesus, then now is the time to accept God's forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ. Allow him to be your Lord and Saviour and to change you completely, not only by bringing you into to a real relationship with God, but also in your day to day life! ●

Methodist President visits Broomhedge

and news of other events in Broomhedge Methodist Church

Derek Boyes

'As we approach the end of another year it is a good time to reflect. This last few months have been busy in Broomhedge as we have dealt with challenge and change; endings and new beginnings; all within the ongoing routines of congregational life.



Visit of the Methodist President, Rev Sam McGuffin

Over the summer we said goodbye to the Rev Dr Jim Williamson and welcomed the Rev Tom Deacon as our retired minister assisting. The summer also marked the ending of our sharing a minister with the Magheragall Society and the beginning of sharing our minister with the Priesthill (Zion) Society.

New beginnings

There have also been new beginnings in our programme of activities. After being closed for a number of years we have reopened our Sunday School.

We have also begun 'Open Door Thursday' on the second Thursday of the month. This is a time of fellowship from 2.30pm to 4.00pm when we share tea coffee and fellowship. Both of these ventures are currently held on a monthly basis and are being well supported. We are grateful to the teams who have initiated and are leading both of these new ventures. Dates for your diary - 9 January, 13 February & 12 March.

Our **Autumn Bible study programme** has recommenced and this year we are meeting as a joint group with our friends from Priesthill joining with us as the Rev Deacon helps us reflect on Methodism.

Harvest & Presidential visit

Harvest is always special in Broomhedge and this year was no exception. Our Harvest choir under the leadership of Matthew Good led the praise at both services while our new assistant minister the Rev Tom Deacon spoke at the morning service and a former minister, the Rev Clive Webster, spoke at the evening service.

On the 9th September we welcomed the President of our Church, the Rev Sam McGuffin, and his wife Linda to our morning service. Following the service the President joined with us for lunch and a time of fellowship as he brought greetings and words of encouragement.



Flowers being presented to Mrs McGuffin

On a reflective note, we are particularly conscious this year that a number of our families have had to deal with the anxiety of illness and the sadness of bereavement. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with all of those families who face such times of challenge.

As you read these words I trust that you are getting the picture of a rural church that is seeking to be faithful to its mission statement of - Welcoming all - Worshipping God - Witnessing in the Community'.

Don't forget our 'OPEN DOOR THURSDAYS'

It's basically what it says on the tin - a cuppa, a tray bake and a chat. There is no restriction on time - you can stay for 10 minutes or from the start to finish.

The next one will be 12 December so if you're at a loose end and want a break from all the Christmas Shopping call in for a Cuppa, Tray bake and a Chat. You will be very welcome.

Future Dates for your diary are 9 January, 13 February & 12 March ●



Seymour Street Sunday School gathered together recently for a praise session

Behold I do a New Thing!

Rev Alan Craig talks to the Editor.

Alan Craig moved from the Bangor Circuit in June this year to take charge of Trinity and Magheragall Churches on our Circuit. His home is in Ballynahinch where his wife, Ruth, is the Methodist Minister. Their son Kyle, aged 16, lives at home and they also have older daughters Tanya and Alana.



Alan started off life in the tough world of Ardoyne in Belfast in the 1960's and he was legally adopted by his grand-mother when he was two. His father, who had been in the Royal Marines and then the B Specials, saw that the 'Troubles' were coming and in 1969 emigrated with Alan to Australia. The day they arrived in Australia they were horrified to see TV images of their own house on fire, and Alan believes that if they had not emigrated he would have ended up in prison or dead, like many of his former friends!

God gets Alan's attention

His Granny, who he refers to as Mum, insisted that he went to church at least twice on Sunday – not that it had much impact at the time and he hated Sundays! His mum died suddenly in 1991, and God got Alan's attention when he read an open Bible in his mother's coffin. It read John 14:1. *"Do not let your heart be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me"*. He had head knowledge of God, but who was this *"me"* that he had just read about?

At this time Alan was a Corporal in the army and he had picked up a Gideon's

Bible which he was reading in secret. Soon every objection he had was knocked down and under the ministry of Rev. Brian Fletcher in Sydenham he made a commitment to Christ in 1991.

When Alan was 13, in 1973, they had moved back to Northern Ireland, settling in Lisburn where he attended Lisnagarvey High School. However, he did not have the least interest in education and left school the week before his O levels started. His Granny wanted him to get a job in Harland and Wolff, but instead he took up an apprenticeship in a cabinet-makers in Lisburn. Very soon he regretted leaving school as he was now at the bottom of the pile rather than a bigger fish as school!

In the Ulster Defence Regiment

A few years later he followed in his father's footsteps and joined the UDR part-time, and subsequently full-time when he was 24. Around that time he met Ruth and they married in 1984 and by 1990 had two girls, Tanya and Alana. Tanya was baptised in the Church of Ireland, but Sydenham Methodist was nearer to their home and when Alana

was baptised there they started attending church. Ruth came home one day and told Alan she had become a Christian and Alan replied 'That's OK as long as you don't try and stuff religion down my throat!' However, the Lord had other plans.

When in 1991 Alan committed his life to the Lord, he plucked up the courage to tell his UDR platoon and he expected to be given a hard time – but the opposite was the case! In fact if any one had tried to make light of his faith his platoon would have sprung to his defence. Nevertheless life in the UDR at that time was hard as they were constantly out on patrol in the Armagh area. Several of Alan's colleagues were killed through terrorism and there was a 1 on 4 chance that the next incident would involve him and he had not made his peace with God. All this was taking its toll on Alan but although he was latterly a Welfare Officer dealing with the problems in his men, it was only just before he retired in 2004 that he realised he was suffering from depression and PTSD himself.

Meanwhile Ruth had candidated for the Ministry, being ordained in 1999, and was stationed first in Moira, Lurgan then Donaghadee. Alan had completed the Local Preachers course in Edgehill, but was sure he did NOT want to be a minister!

God calls Alan

When Alan retired from the UDR/R Irish Regiment he became a house husband until Ruth gave him his marching orders and told him to fill in a Translink bus driver application form! He was a bus driver for over 6 years. During that time he found he was the one other Translink staff turned to him for help and support. It was in 2010 that Alan was told he had all the criteria to candidate for the Ministry by Ruth and that conversation ignited a fire within himself to candidate and he felt that he was being called.

First he had to complete an A level in RE – in 1 year – and then it was Edgehill College for two years. It seems that while he successfully passed through the necessary hoops, being ordained in 2017, he remains somewhat frustrated with the college process which he feels does not really prepare candidates for life in the Ministry as it actually is!

Alan's first stationing was in Primacy Church, Bangor, which was facing a threat of closure largely due to a debt hanging over it. Inspired by *Isaiah 43, 18-19, "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!"* He challenged the people in Primacy to pray and that prayer meeting is still happening, and is a testament to what is still happening, in Primacy. The congregation, although small, is punching above its weight, and has risen to the challenge to keep the gospel real and alive in Primacy.

The move to Lisburn

Now he is still trying to get the measure of his new role as minister of Trinity and Magheragall congregations. *Isaiah 43:19* was the call to worship at the welcome service in Seymour Street and he is wondering how and when the Lord will '*Do a new thing*' in Lisburn – and knows that there is great potential, and under God's guidance exciting things can happen. He has visited his former school of Lisnagarvey where his message to the pupils was not to make the mistake that he did, failing to value education and the opportunities that it brings.

Alan brings to his ministry a life of many widely different experiences which have left deep impressions, and even scars, but through which he has seen God at work in his own life in totally unexpected and unsought ways. The verses in *Isaiah 43* declaring that the Lord will do a new thing mean a lot to Alan as they describe so much of his own life as he has done so many new things! ●

13 Christmas Joy!

The Dromore Christmas Tree Festival 13th to 15th December

Dromore Methodists are, at time of print, gearing up for a Christmas Tree Festival to be held 13-15 December 2019. This will hopefully be our last big fundraising push to clear the cost of building the halls and new rooms ten years ago. Please read this article as our warm invitation to you to join in!

A place of beauty and meaning

Entrance to the Festival will be through the main doors of the church on Maypole Hill (the street with the Chemists shops in Dromore). Walk into the church sanctuary and you will discover a space transformed by lights and creativity. Trees decorated or sponsored by local people, churches, organisations and businesses will delight you as you make your way through the building. Musicians and singers will play live Christmas music on the hour, and you will find yourself not wanting to leave! Take a seat, close your eyes, pray and invite God to bring you into not 'that

Christmassy feeling' but the deep joy that comes from knowing Him through Jesus Christ.

There will be a number of points where you can interact with the trees – for instance add to the decorations of one tree with your own words of joy and thanksgiving, post prayer requests for personal needs and other situations around the world at the Prayer Tree, and use the Blue Christmas 'remembering' tree to remember those whose presence we miss due to distance or death. A Kids' Craft room will be open for children to take some time to also engage with the theme of Christmas Joy.

Festive refreshments

When you've spent some time taking in the Christmas forest, head through the link corridor to the new hall, where hot drinks and festive treats will be served. Viewing of the trees and enjoying

SAVE THE DATE

Christmas Tree Festival

13-15 December 2019

at Dromore Methodist Church

Viewing Times:

Friday 2pm to 8pm

Saturday 10am to 6.30pm

Sunday 2pm to 4pm

View a selection of trees created by local businesses, groups and church members on the theme:

"Christmas Joy!"

Festive refreshments, and crafts for children, available throughout

Groups welcome:

Contact Des 07746 091655

Suggested donation:

£5 (children £2)

Craft Fair: Saturday 10am-2.30pm

Gatherings:

Opening Prayer

Friday 2pm

Worship Night

Saturday 7pm

Morning Worship

Sunday 11am

Carol Service

Sunday 4.30pm

Find us at
2 Maypole Hill, Dromore BT25 1BQ
www.dromoremethodist.org

 DromoreMethodistChurch

refreshments can take place on Friday 13 December 2pm-8pm, Saturday 14th 10am-6.30pm and Sunday 15th 2pm-4pm. The suggested donation for entrance is £5 (children £2) and your gifts will be gratefully received.

Special events

We are honoured that the Festival will be opened by the Lord Mayor of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Councillor Mealla Campbell (Friday 2pm). The Methodist North Eastern District Superintendent, the Rev. Philip Agnew, will lead us in prayer during the Opening Ceremony and a local school choir will be singing.

Our annual **Christmas Fair** will be happening as usual on Saturday 14th in the morning (10am-12.30pm), with crafts, cakes, decorations and a range of second-hand books and goods on offer. On the Saturday evening we're looking

forward to Storyteller and Methodist Lay Leader, Mrs. Lynda Neilands, joining us for an informal **Worship Night** at 7pm. The evening will include lots of singing, and Lynda will be telling Christmas stories.

The following day (Sunday 15 December) we'll be delighted to welcome the Methodist President, the Rev. Sam McGuffin, as preacher for our **Sunday morning service** at 11am. And the Christmas Tree Festival will conclude with our annual **Carol Service** at 4.30pm. All special events are open to the public.

Your invitation

We're really looking forward to this celebration of joy, and with nearly forty Christmas trees confirmed it promises to be a beautiful and inspiring visit for all who come to view the displays and enjoy refreshments afterwards. ●



Cup presented in memory of Rev Austin Hassard

At a recent meeting of the Seymour Street Bowling club a cup was presented by in Austin's memory by his family, Desmon, Maureen and Brian. Desmond continues to be an active member of the club which he attended with Austin for many years, winning several trophies. Austin first attended the Club when he was minister in Glenavy, and continued to play when he moved to Magheragall and subsequently retired to Lisburn. He was able to play bowls until he was 90 and died aged 91 in July 2018.

Introducing Ashleigh O'Sullivan

Ashleigh, from Donaghadee, was recently appointed as Youth Pastor at Seymour Street. The Editor took the opportunity to ask her to tell us more about herself.



Ashleigh at her welcome service in October with the Rev Dr Edmund Mawhinney, the Pastoral Assistant, Shirley Carrington and the Society Stewards Dr Chris Greer and Pete Livingstone

What were you like growing up?

I wouldn't say I was the quietest person in the room but I wasn't the loudest either. But neither was I was shy. I always loved making new friends and meeting new people. I had a pretty laid-back personality but I loved being social. I wasn't particularly gifted at sports or anything music related (still the case!). I worked hard to get the grades I did but I wouldn't say that was a defining aspect of who I was as a teenager.

Something I actually loved during my teenage years was my ability to organise and plan. During my final years at school I had different jobs in a few restaurants, which I loved. But I also managed to find time to study and be active both in my church and in school life. Some of my favourite school memories include being given the opportunity to plan charity concerts and having the opportunity to plan various other events during my time as Head Girl.

Who influenced you in becoming/growing as a Christian?

When I first made a commitment to

follow Jesus I was about 8 years old, but I didn't really begin taking my faith seriously until I was about 14 years old.

I became friends with a group that invited me to their youth club, and eventually that turned into going to that church's youth fellowship and church services. I had been a part of a church before but this was my first experience of a church with a youth ministry. The people and the leaders that I met during that time who were forever pouring into me and encouraging me were a huge influence for my faith during my teenage years. They also provided me with leadership opportunities from a young age and encouraged me to fall in love with youth ministry.

Outside of Church I had a really good group of Christian friends surrounding me in school. Scripture Union was huge for me in my faith. I loved being a part of S.U., I loved the community I had there and the relationships we had with teachers that led the group as well as the staff from SUNI who came along side us and journeyed with us. This is why I value schools work the way that I do.

What church and youth groups were you in?

From the age of 14 until I was 18 I went to Newtownards Elim Church. I regularly attended a Wednesday night Bible study, a youth club that took place on a Saturday night which was a space that was pretty unstructured. It was a place where you could just hangout and be with your friends and your leaders. I also went to a youth fellowship where we worshipped together. Usually there was teaching and time for prayer. We also had weekends away and we worked together on various outreach projects. When I was 18 I started my degree and was placed in West Presbyterian church in Bangor.

What mattered to you most as a teenager?

I think a lot of the things that mattered to me back then are probably very similar to the things that matter to me now. Something that's always mattered to me is community. I love being in community and I love seeing community take place. Which is probably where my love of planning comes from. I especially love seeing the church do this well. I just think that the church is one of the few places that brings so many people from various ages, backgrounds and walks of life

together and there is something so beautiful and unique about that which gives us so many incredible opportunities when we picture what community could look like.

Why did you do the degree in youth/religious studies?

The full title of my degree is 'Youth and community work and practical theology'. As I was getting closer to applying to Universities, God's call on my life to serve young people was becoming more and more obvious. What I loved about the course was the amount of experience I was able to gain from the program. As part of the program I had to carry out a three-year faith-based placement and two alternative placements which for me were Positive futures in Bangor and The Holywood family Trust.

Because of the placement side of the course, it is preferred that students are not straight out of school, so I didn't think I was going to get in, but I did!

What did you learn from your time at West Church.

During my time at West Church I would have say that I was given such a wonderful opportunity to see leadership modelled really well and I loved working as part of a youth and children's team



Ashleigh's weekly Bible Study group

17 that brought so many different gifts to the youth ministry. As a youth ministry there was so much to get involved in and be a part of. I got to lead a Discipleship group for year 9 girls which I was responsible for getting started in my first year and It was such a privilege to journey with those girls and watch them grow up.

I was involved in a program called Coffee Bar which was similar to a youth club. This took place on a Friday afternoon and attracted a lot of young people from the community and we had a service on Sunday mornings called 'Young West' which was a service for the young people. On a Sunday morning I also helped out with the P5 and P6 Sunday school class. Outside of our usual programs I spent a lot of time meeting with young people and building relationships with them.

Each program I was involved with allowed me to be connected with very different young people which taught me a lot about building intentional relationships. I learned so much about working as a team and leadership, As well as getting plenty of practice at things like preparing Bible Studies, talks and curriculum.

Tell us about Nashville

I was in Nashville from July 2018 to June 2019, working for First Presbyterian, Nashville. I was supposed to be there until July, but my trip was cut short for a very exciting reason. Every year the High School seniors go on a 'Mystery trip' before they head to college. The young people don't know where they are going, their parents don't know, the leaders don't know. It is a very well-kept secret! But this year I was asked to bring the young

people to Northern Ireland for a week for the mystery trip, so my first week back home was spent sleeping in Crawfordsburn Scout Centre and The Ulster Folk and transport Museum. I couldn't have asked for a sweeter way to spend my first week home.

During my time in Nashville I worked with and learned from so many wonderful people. However, the most interesting probably would have been Adam DeVries. He was the 'Associate Pastor to youth and their Families'. Not only was he incredible leader and Pastor but he had such a passion for fun! He is the son of Mark DeVries, the author of 'Sustainable Youth Ministry', a man who was hugely influential when I was writing my Dissertation in final year.

What did you learn from that experience?

Ministry in Nashville looked so different to youth ministry over here and so I got to learn a lot. Schools ministry in Nashville looked like bringing kids lunch and eating with them, or going to games or performances that there were so many of. I was going to two or three events every week. The kids were so busy all the time that finding time to meet with them was almost impossible, so we went to them. This taught me so much about how to be intentional in





meeting kids where they are and just being present and showing up. Our youth ministry model was based heavily on encouraging volunteers to get involved and build relationships with kids. Volunteers did so much for our youth ministry just to make it happen and we were just their to support them so I learned about coordinating, building relationships with, and just being so grateful for, volunteer youth leaders.

Leading with them and learning from them was such a joy!

I was also given freedom to plan, create and dream while also working with the most wonderful passionate group of people. Leading with them and learning from them was such a joy! We were always planning big events and going on trips and being part of the planning process and creating with our team was an experience that taught me a lot of new skills.

Outside of the job, Nashville taught me a lot. It was the first time I had travelled on my own, or lived with people that I didn't genetically love, and I was in a country where the only person I knew was the man who hired me. However

over that entire year in a new country I was never lonely. During my first three weeks in Nashville I didn't cook a single meal because families had invited me to lunches and dinners every day. Southern hospitality is like nothing I have ever seen before. Families invited me into their homes for thanksgiving and Christmas.

In my third week I celebrated my 23rd birthday and my co-worker and his wife, Kody and Megan threw a birthday party for me. Their family became the greatest support system I could have asked for. They were my 'American Family' and I couldn't be more grateful for them.

I learned a lot about making space for my own spiritual growth. In the past I've been so busy leading Bible studies that I never actually got to attend them myself.

My biggest prayer was that I would find community and God answered that in abundance.

When I was away I attended Tuesday night worship alongside 600 other young adults at a local church but also attended a weekly Bible study with a group of girls my age which I loved being a part of.



Ashleigh with her family

My biggest prayer was that I would find community and God answered that in abundance. On one of my final evenings in Nashville I had a campfire at my house and invited friends over. My driveway was packed to capacity with cars, and my home was filled with the most wonderful people. I remember just looking round and being reminded of Gods goodness and of how he provides and answers our prayers.

What do you hope to bring to Seymour Street?

Everything is still so new at the moment and I feel like I am still learning about

what goes on in the life of the church, but I hope that my love for creating spaces for community shows as I find new and creative ways to bring that into my role. I am excited about building relationships with our youth leaders and I am so keen to find ways to support them and love them well. I have also expressed my love of schools ministry and I am excited about getting connected with our local schools. Something else I am passionate about connecting young people with Christ and encouraging them to grow deeper in their relationship with Christ in new and creative ways. ●

The Registers

BROOMHEDGE

Deaths

Mr Mervyn Dunbar
Mrs Eileen Megarry
Mrs Vera Crawford
Mrs Margaret Boyes

MAGHERAGALL

Deaths

Mr Jim Scott

PRIESTHILL

Baptism

Ben Matthew Bolton
son of David and Emma Bolton

Deaths

Mrs Marina McKeown

SEYMOUR STREET

Deaths:

Mr William Thompson
Mr Noel Mawhinney
Mr Wilson Stewart

Wedding:

Peter Johnston to Laura McCallum

Baptisms:

Emily Ruth Lowry
daughter of William Lowry & Robyn Lyons
Emily Charlotte Patricia Black
daughter of Gavin & Nicola Black

Seymour Street takes the road to Fermanagh!

.A report from Shirley Carrington



In October a number of folk from Seymour Street, and some friends, took a few days away to Enniskillen. We stayed in the Killyhelvin Hotel and enjoyed the most beautiful autumnal weather in Co. Fermanagh. After enjoying a very hearty breakfast we made our way to Enniskillen for a tour of the Castle and some shopping. During the few days away we – sailed down the Carrick-on-Shannon, shopped in Sligo and enjoyed the splendour of Glencar Waterfall. Our trip to the 'Famine Village in Doagh (Co. Donegal) was amazing – not to mention the refreshments!!!.

Among many other activities we had a great morning at Belleek Pottery and it was lovely to see Brian Hassard hard at work (!!) and we are thankful to Brian for his welcome to us in Belleek. On the way home we shopped in Omagh Town and finished our tour off with the most beautiful evening meal before we set off for Lisburn. Of course the food was wonderful, the craic was mighty and the singing – well need I say more 'Daniel all the Way (and home again!!). This was a great few days away and it was lovely just to be together, enjoy the fellowship, and hopefully the trip away will set us all up for the Winter to come. 🍷



Scaling new heights!



Every second Sunday of the month, the young people of Trinity meet for The Hub (P6- Year 9) and Connected (Year 10 -up). The time they spend together is a mixture of prayer, praise and study alongside games, conversations and of course some food!

On the second Sunday in October, however, the young people did

something a little different. The leaders wanted to arrange an outing and the members voted to go to the new "clip'n'climb" facility in Lisburn called High Rise. 18 young people met and challenged themselves to climb many different walls like The Astroball. The Speed Climb and The Stairway To Heaven. They all had a great time and enjoyed trying something new and competing against each other. ●



Samuel Wilson Stewart

Our Seymour Street Society was greatly saddened by the death of Wilson Stewart in early November. From his initial diagnosis with bowel cancer more than two years ago Wilson faced the future with a wonderful faith, great determination a positive outlook and his characteristic sense of humour.

At the Service of Thanksgiving tributes were paid to his many roles in the life of church, his outstanding service as a manager in the Danske Bank, and his devotion to Adrienne and the family right to the end.

A gifted musician and photographer, keen footballer and follower of Ulster rugby Wilson managed to accomplish so much without appearing stressed or flustered, and after his diagnosis fulfilled his initial target of walking Hannah up the aisle - having driven her to church in his Mazda 5!

Wilson's Christian faith in the face of adversity has been an inspiration to us all and our prayers and thoughts are for Adrienne, Hannah, Jonathan and the other family members, including Wilson's mother at this time. ●

Magheragall News

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Harvest Weekend

On Friday October 11th we had a congregational meal in our church hall with The Mulberry Tree providing a delicious meal, we then proceeded over to the church where George Conn gave us an interesting insight to the Bagpipe. He was suitably attired in his kilt and together with his wife Andrea on the keyboard they played beautiful music. He was able to bring in a gospel message through his presentation. Thank you George and Andrea for a wonderful evening.

On Sunday morning we had as our Special Speaker, Tom Saunderson from Glenwherry. Tom conducts a Farmers Mission every year in the Ballymena Livestock Market on first weekend in November and this year there were over 1500 attended each evening.

He spoke at our harvest on Ruth and Boaz. Our special music was provided by Noel Guest on the organ and Graham Murphy on piano who also sang two pieces. We had a wonderful uplifting service. On Sunday night we welcomed back to Magheragall Rev Alan Wardlow who was a Lay evangelist with us many years ago. He brought with him Miss Mollie Trimble who also used to play the organ in Magheragall. Mrs Melanie Topley was our soloist and we give thanks to The Lord for a wonderful Harvest weekend and for His Goodness to us all every day of the year.



Wednesday Group

On Wednesday 23rd October we were delighted to welcome Wee Minnie from Belfast who shared with us her experiences of growing up with her family during the Belfast Blitz. She appeared suitably attired in her wrap-over apron, complete with her head-scarf and of course her stockings with the line up the back.

Her antidotes of life living in the street were hilarious, but also the serious side came through with her experience of hearing the German bombs dropping over the city. She was then evacuated to the country where she enjoyed the wide open spaces.

Thank you to those who faithfully come to our monthly meetings, and to those who help to make the afternoon



Newtownards Road Methodist Church after the Belfast Blitz

enjoyable. Our meeting in November is a visit to the Mayors Parlour.

Christmas Carols by Candlelight will be held on Sunday 1st December at 4.00pm. Taking part: Craigmores Puppets. This will be followed by a Festive Tea in The Church Hall. ●



FALLFEST 2019

