

Eagle Wing Newsletter



Christmas 2024

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Message from the Minister



Most of us know “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” as a song. However, it started out as story book.

In 1939, Robert L. May, created the story of Rudolph. Tasked with writing a Christmas promotional children’s booklet, May crafted the tale of a reindeer born with an unusual, glowing red nose. Mocked by his peers and feeling like an outcast, Rudolph’s moment of triumph came when Santa recognised the value of his unique gift. On a foggy Christmas Eve, Rudolph lead Santa’s sleigh, ensuring Christmas joy reached children everywhere.

The story was an immediate success, with 2.4 million booklets distributed in its first year. But Rudolph’s fame reached even greater heights in 1949 when Johnny Marks, May’s brother-in-law, adapted the story into a song. Recorded by Gene Autry, “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” became a chart-topping hit, selling millions of copies and cementing Rudolph as a cherished Christmas icon.

The beloved tale of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” has captured hearts for generations, becoming an enduring symbol of the joy and happiness of Christmas. Rudolph’s journey reflects the universal human experience of feeling different or unworthy but out of rejection comes hope and purpose. Truly that is what Christmas is all about. It’s for those of us who feel outcasts, unworthy, even failures. Christmas reminds us of God’s boundless love—a love so profound that he sent his Son into the world, born humbly in a manger, to redeem and restore us.

As you listen to “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” this Christmas, let it remind you of the deeper truth of the season: the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. In Him, God assures us of our worth, despite our flaws and sins. When we place our faith in Him, he transforms our unique gifts and circumstances into blessings for others.

Like Rudolph, who was initially dismissed for his perceived flaw, God delights in using those whom many would overlook to fulfil his plans. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

At Christmas, we celebrate this hope—a hope that lifts the weary, restores the broken, and brings light into the darkness.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and happy New Year.

Your minister

Paul

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Ziegler".

CONGREGATIONAL RECORD

DEATHS

1 st October 2024	Mrs Evelyn McCambley	District 17
4 th November 2024	Mrs Maureen Larkin	District 21
14 th November 2024	Mrs Myrtle Beattie	District 23
19 th November 2024	Mrs Elizabeth Ferris	District 7

Useful Contacts

Minister: Rev Paul Dalzell 07909 896123
Pastoral Assistant: Rev Denis Campbell 07716 332769
Clerk of Session: Dr Michael Steele 028 9127 4559
Facilities Coordinator: Mr Ian McDonald 07899 718089
Office Secretary: Mrs Julie McClurg 028 9146 2552

Email: office@groomsportpresbyterian.com
Church Website: www.groomsportpresbyterian.com



CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT
SUNDAY 15th DECEMBER 2024
7.00 pm

Do plan to attend this special service of lessons and carols, regarded over the years as a meaningful way to welcome the Christmas season. The choir has been rehearsing appropriate music this year, with a mixture of contemporary and popular carols.

There will be the usual opportunity for the good congregational singing for which Groomsport Presbyterian is renowned.

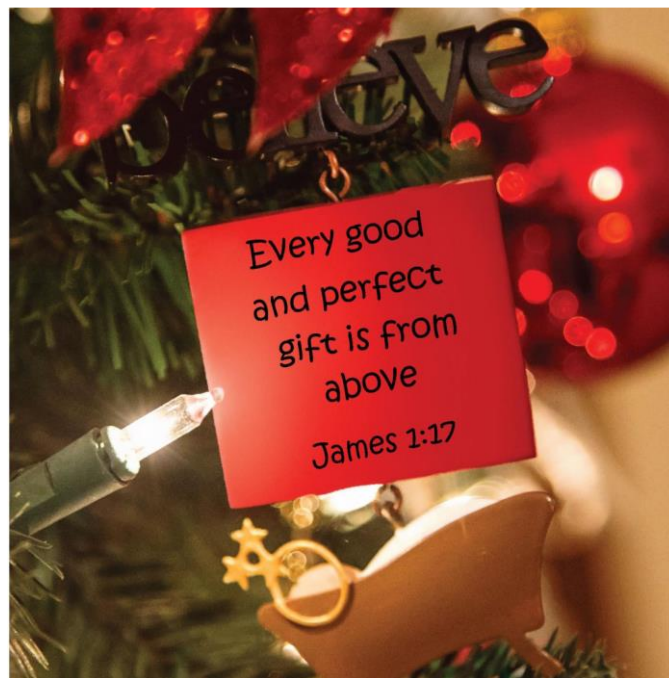
A full church will be a true encouragement for those who are preparing to make this a service of real significance.

FORTHCOMING SERVICES

Carols by Candlelight
Sunday 15th December
at 7.00pm

Wednesday 25th December 10.30am Christmas Day Family Service

Sunday 5th January 11.00am New Year Communion Service



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 17th February

Congregational Committee Meeting

Saturday 8th March

PW Coffee Morning

Monday 3rd March

AGM



Kidszone is going from strength to strength. We have approximately 20 children on our register with numbers varying each week. We have a variety of activities for the children to do each week learning about a story from the Bible.

All gifts donated from our Gift Day Service will be donated to Belfast Central Mission.

Kidszone runs all year so there is no break at Christmas!

Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas.

The Kidszone Team.

Presbyterian Women

Ladies of all ages are welcome to come along and join us on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month at 7.30pm in The Archie Agnew Hall. You will receive a very warm welcome, friendship and fellowship.

Our programme for the New Year is as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 13 th January | Rev Fred Munce MBE
Stories from Beyond the Stereotype |
| 27 th January | Dr Michael Steele
Malawi Memories |
| 10 th February | Rev Denis Campbell
“China in 1930s A Missionary Adventure” |
| 24 th February | Bible Study and “Scarecrow” |
| 10 th March | Chloe Higginson (Stephanie’s niece)
Human Trafficking |
| 24 th March | AGM |

Our Spring Coffee Morning will be Saturday 8th March

At this time of year, we remember all the ladies who are unable to be with us and the families who have lost a member throughout the year.

We wish God’s blessing on them all



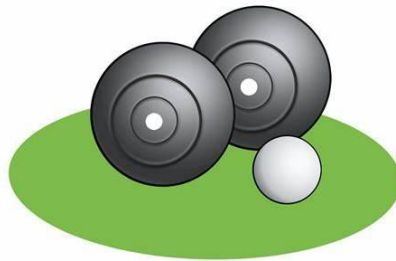
BADMINTON CLUB

The Badminton Club continues to meet in the Walter Nelson Hall on Wednesday mornings from 10am to 12 noon.

We are pleased that a good number of ladies come along for a game or two, tea or coffee and lots of fun and chat. We would be delighted to welcome some gentlemen to join us.

We are having a Christmas lunch on 11th December in Bangor Golf Club. We will then have a break until a date in January which has yet to be arranged but will be in the church announcements.

Margaret McCreedy



BOWLING CLUB

The bowling club have started the season with enthusiasm and fun each Wednesday evening. To date we had a match against Bangor Abbey club with more to follow next year.

A Christmas supper is planned before finishing this first part of the season.

Bowling club meet each Wednesday evening at 7.15pm in Walter Nelson Hall..

We wish everyone a very happy and joyous Christmas, and blessings for 2025.

Jean Wilson



THE LEISURE GROUP

The Leisure Group continue to have a great group of ladies enjoying friendship and exercise. Once again we had a very successful coffee morning in October. Money raised at our coffee mornings go to various charities. A big thank you to all who supported this event.

We wish all our members and their families a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

We look forward to the new year and hope to resume on 7th January to work off all excess eating over the festive season.

Sandra Todd



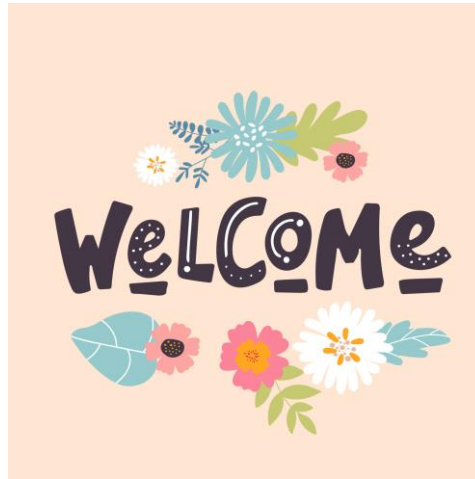
HOBBY HUB

This this is a small group, but we have been pleased that recently some more folks have joined us on occasions.

Please consider coming. Bring your knitting or any other hobby. We have been doing jigsaw and having lots of chat. Join the fun if you are free to pop in. All are welcome not just church members.

Margaret McCreedy

Tai Chi for Health at The Hub



Tai Chi classes continue on Mondays and Thursdays. Everyone is progressing well with this new venture. Learning a mind and body exercise is excellent for improving cognitive function. Patience is key!

Our classes finish on 9th and 12th December respectively with a cuppa and mince pies. I plan to restart on January 4th. I have a few names for a new beginners class on Mondays at 10.00 am (time to be confirmed). If anyone is interested would they please contact me directly on 07703 360 385 or at janetwilson18@gmail.com.

As a group we have made three donations of £100 each this term to Chest Heart and Stroke, Groomsport Presbyterian Missionary Fund and Groomsport Presbyterian General Fund.

Finally my sincere thanks to Ian and Anne for their help in setting up the halls for the classes each week.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas on behalf of the Tai Chi members.

Janet Wilson



Church Flowers

May I take this opportunity to thank all the ladies who have provided the beautiful floral arrangements and displays over the past year. They are a diligent, reliable team who make our church look so colourful and welcoming each week, and also, on special occasions.

I really appreciate their effort and support.
Have a wonderful Christmas, and to those involved, keep an eye out for the new rota coming soon!!!!

Joyce Currie



Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal

A big thank you to all those who supported the Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal for needy children worldwide.

Groomsport has donated 52 boxes.

Each box will bring the message of God's love to a child and let them know that others are thinking of them.

Thank you so much.

Maureen Irwin

Becoming a Grandparent

Recently I had the joy of joining this exclusive club, when little Florence Violet June was born on 24th July 2024 to my daughter Shannon and son-in-law Karl in Germany.

She is my first grandchild and the first great grandchild of June and Bobby Kirk.



This was a much-anticipated birth and one that was counted down on a weekly basis after being told the news 6 months previously. I thought I would take all this in my stride, but the feelings of anxiousness stayed with me until this precious baby was born.

Several of my friends are already in this position and had told me “There is nothing like the feeling of being a grandparent” – one I have to say I thought I could handle without fuss as I had three children of my own. How wrong was I?!! How can something so small reduce you to a quivering wreck?

Perhaps when you become a grandparent the experience kicks in automatically - you have a sixth sense with how to deal with situations, and what is required - but nothing quite prepared me for the paraphernalia that comes with a baby in 2024. The baby bath is a contraption in itself – set on its own stand, and with a seat inside, which Florence could only be put into once wrapped in a muslin, and most definitely only when the water temperature had been checked 27 times with a special thermometer. When she comes to stay with me, she gets bathed in the kitchen sink!

Bedtime routine is another new experience. Florence wears an Owlet – a sock which monitors her every movement and is dressed in a 2.5 tog swaddle bag. She also has a camera attached to her cot which we all are tuned into downstairs, just in case she stirs – remember when you held a finger under their nose?

Florence has brought such great joy to everyone in our family and it’s difficult to remember prior to her being here as she already consumes so much of our life. She is such a clever little girl – she sends her Great-Nanny (June) a WhatsApp message every morning with a photo of what she’s currently doing. The powers of technology, or better still the powers of her Great-Nanny using her phone correctly!

Shannon asked me recently did I love her this much when she was born – the answer was of course yes, but when you become a parent for the first time there seem so many other things to contend with too. When you’re a grandparent you know the things that take priority, and those that can wait.

Children are a blessing, but in my experience, they can push you to the limits at times, and no doubt this little one will do the same with her parents. I’ll be in the background refereeing, but all the time thanking God for the privilege.

Paula Montgomery



A brief Report on two Property Matters in the Church

Just two brief property items, in relation to the Church Building, which I thought might be of interest to our Members.

1.0 THE LIGHTS IN THE CHURCH.

A few months ago, one of the main lights in the church ceiling stopped working and when Ian McDonald went into the roof space and removed it. He discovered that some of the wiring in this fitting had actually melted, which was worrying, as this could have caused a fire.

All of our lights within the church (apart from the ceiling mounted floodlights) were installed, in or around, 1990, as part of the '1991 PROJECT' and so they are now 24 years old and unfortunately replacements are no longer available. Accordingly the only option we had was to totally replace all the lights in the main ceiling, but we also considered that it would be prudent to change all of the other lights in the church at the same time .

As a result, new LED lights were selected to replace the eight existing lights in the main ceiling and twenty-two other lights were chosen as replacements in the Vestibule, on the ceiling under the balcony and on the main ceiling above the balcony.

Ian managed to purchase these lights at wholesale prices and since then he has been working hard for many weeks replacing all thirty lights within the church. We are all very grateful to him for using his electrical expertise in undertaking this particular work.

Incidentally, these new LED (Light-Emitting Diodes) lights are very much more efficient than the old ones and so our running costs will be much less in the future.

2.0 REPAIRS TO THE EXTERNAL WALL ON THE BANGOR SIDE.

Anyone attending church in recent weeks will have noticed that an area of plaster was removed in front of the balcony.

In addition, an area of rendering of similar size was removed from the exterior and perhaps you have wondered why these two areas were the subject of recent repairs?

Away back as part of the '1991 PROJECT', a new balcony was created and the front support of this balcony is a Structural Steel truss, which spans right across the church, between the two external walls.

A large opening was formed in the external wall on the Bangor Side of the church, to allow this truss to be installed and once it was in its final position, the ends were surrounded in concrete and the outside of the wall was rendered and painted.

However, over the years, it is my theory that the concrete surround would have shrunk a little, allowing minor cracks to form between it and the stonework, thus allowing moisture to permeate across to the inside of this wall. Over this past couple of years, the internal plaster has been showing signs of minor dampness and upon investigation, we discovered that there was a reasonably significant area of plaster that was loose. This would have attracted moisture being drawn across the small gap between the wall and the plaster, by capillary action.

As a consequence of these defects, we removed the relevant areas of internal plaster and external rendering and then suitably treated the cracks and gaps, before replastering and re-rendering this wall.

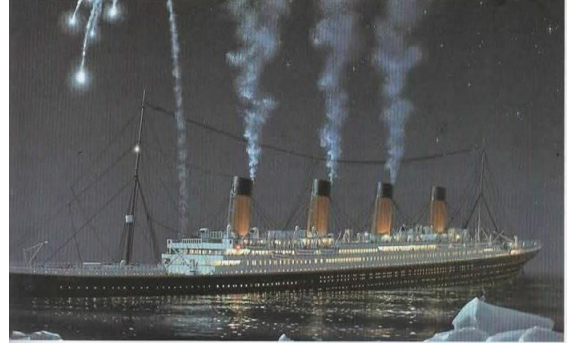
We are hopeful that these repairs will solve the dampness problems and once the new rendering and plaster have dried out sufficiently, both the inside and outside of this wall will be painted, which probably will be completed by the time you read this article.

Lowry Manson
Property Convenor
November 2024

Whatever Happened to Baby Seaborn?

I noticed in the Belfast Telegraph recently that a gold pocket watch presented to the captain of the boat which rescued more than 700 passengers from the Titanic sold for a record-breaking £1.56million. This revelation set me on a train of thought.

The largest ship of its time, the Titanic was built on Belfast Lough in 1911/12. Another ship, Eagle Wing, somewhat smaller, was also built on Belfast Lough in 1635/36. Titanic, as we know, sped across the North Atlantic in April, 1912 bound for New York where a triumphant welcome awaited as she glided in glory past the Statue of Liberty.



Eagle Wing, newly made of stout, local oak timber, sailed from Groomsport on the 9th September 1636, very late in the season, bound for the mouth of the little Merrimac River as it spilled into the North Atlantic, just north of Boston, and a possible hostile reception from native Americans. Neither ship was destined to reach its destination.

Titanic, carrying 2224 passengers, was 36, 328 tons of steel, Eagle Wing, a mere 150 tons of wood and sail, had 140 passengers on board. On a glassy ocean southeast of Newfoundland Titanic struck a huge iceberg and within minutes sank to the ocean's icy depths.

Now here's the thing: Charting probably the same course 276 years earlier than Titanic, Eagle Wing was nearer the banks of Newfoundland than any part of Europe when hit by a mighty hurricane out of the northwest. So, in approximately the same area of the huge North Atlantic Ocean en-route to New England, Eagle Wing had encountered a hurricane and Titanic an iceberg.

A favourable wind had enabled our bold little ship to plunge across the North Atlantic as if on eagle wings. The square-rigged vessel braved waves so mountainous they hid the sun from sight. Many were stricken with seasickness. In the cramped and unhygienic conditions below deck passengers had little option but to thole it. After all, they were escaping religious persecution by the Episcopal authorities for a promising new life in the "New World".

Then, above the noise of crashing waves, the lung- bursting cry of a newborn baby could be heard. Amidst the mayhem raging above them and the scurrying of rats around them, Mr and Mrs Michael Coltheard had become proud, though anxious, parents of a baby girl, premature no doubt. She was soon baptized and named "Seaborn" for obvious reasons, by the Reverend John Livingstone of Killinchy, one of six ministers on board.

And that is all I know for certain about Seaborn Coltheard and her parents. Did she survive the extreme conditions to return to Co Down? Did she have brothers and sisters, raise a family of her own? Is there someone presently living in North Down who is a descendant of Seaborn?

The surname Coltheard originates in the Galloway district of Scotland – the same origins as my own surname (there was a Rev John McClelland, a schoolmaster from Newtownards via Galloway, on board Eagle Wing). A variant of the name today is “Coulthard”. The Telephone Book informs me there are Coulthards living in North Down. The Coltheards came to North Down from Scotland before their pioneering spirit and religious zeal took them on that potentially disastrous voyage to the New World.

Little Seaborn may have been asleep, blissfully unaware of the extensive damage caused to Eagle Wing by the storm. A serious leak had sprung beside the keel which was staunched by wedges and wadding. More than that, as the pilot lost control it became evident that the rudder was either broken or driven off its hinges.

Prayers for deliverance were answered when up stepped the hero of the hour, a shipwright named Andrew Agnew: “I will venture my life for the safety of all the rest, for if someone do not do it, we are all gone.”

A long rope was tied to Andrew’s middle, tools attached to his waist, and he was lowered over the stern of the ship down into that maelstrom of madness where the rudder was located. Despite the movement of the ship in the high wind and cruel sea Andrew laboured hard to make a successful repair of the rudder.

Now there was a decision to be made: to continue the voyage or return home? The master and crew felt it was impossible for them to hold out any longer. Should the current storm be beaten, there were certain to be others before New England could be reached. The original folly of sailing at the end of the North Atlantic’s fleeting summer became apparent.

After much prayer the conclusion was reached that it was God’s will they should return to Ireland. Next morning at daybreak, Eagle Wing was turned about and made good way with a main-cross and a little fore-top sail. The crossing was rough, but at last, on the 3rd November, Eagle Wing anchored at Belfast Lough, after 8 weeks at sea.

On 1st September 1985 Titanic was found two and a half miles down on the ocean floor, around 370 miles off the coast of Newfoundland: a colossal wreck in deep water, unsinkable, and the band played on.

No, I haven’t forgotten about Baby Seaborn. I like to imagine she survived her hazardous birth, the return voyage, to grow up on a little family farm in Ballyhay near Donaghadee with her parents and siblings. Then, at the age of about twenty, marry her childhood sweetheart, another Ulster Scot from across the fields in the townland of Cotton, by the name of James McCl...and perpetuate the name “Seaborn”.

by Brian McClelland

NEWS from the LINDA NORGRÖVE FOUNDATION

The foundation exists to support women and children within a culture which is hostile to their personal development, denying them education and depriving them of choices in terms of clothes and going beyond the confines of their own home unless accompanied by a close male relative. They are forbidden to speak outside the home, to visit parks or to sing.

Having lost their daughter to a kidnapping of their daughter by the Taliban while she was working as a development worker in Afghanistan, Linda Norgrove's parents started this foundation in her memory.



By building a small number of contacts whom they could trust in Afghanistan they have created and supported an institute dedicated to the training of midwives, that being the only profession women are allowed to enter. From next year, there will be 60 student midwives, 20 in each of three study years. They also have a scheme to provide coats and shoes for children who have none, this being the poorest country in the world outside Africa. The cost of a pair of shoes and a coat for a child in this context is small. Recently gifts amounting to £7000 from the UK allowed 400 coats and 400 pairs of shoes to be purchased. The lady who manages this aspect of the work in Afghanistan sends photographs of the children who receive these items. Her work and that of the German lady who supervises the midwifery institute are monitored by Sophie who manages the financing and the integrity of its processes from the Isle of Lewis which was Linda Norgrove's home.

As a result of the generosity of members of the congregation who enjoyed the recent Praise Service with Donaghadee Community Choir, the mission committee by adding some money from their funds, has been able to contribute £1000 to the support of midwife education and £500 to allow the purchase of a coat and a pair of shoes for children in one of the rural communities. As the mission committee receives further news of the help made possible by donations from Groomsport, we will update the congregation.

The photos below show some of the children who have received new coats and shoes



The World Development Appeal this year is entitled: “Hunger Pains: Scarcity to Abundance.”



The pain of hunger is a reality for many across the world today who are living below the poverty line. How can we help?

We can give to the PCI's World Development Appeal to supply the necessary funds to support Tearfund projects in Rwanda, Malawi, Bangladesh, Uganda and Burkina Faso and Christian Aid projects in Honduras, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and also Burkina Faso.

The lead project this year is in Rwanda - where Tearfund is working through the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda to bring not only practical help but also the gospel.



Rev Joseph Muhire (PC Rwanda): “We are asking the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to pray for us. Especially, we want the church to grow. We want that the good news will reach to many people and we want them to come to Christ. Please pray for the church in Rwanda to have everything needed to reach to those people in the community.”

We commend Rev Joseph to your prayers and we ask that you give generously to the Lord's work in Rwanda and to the other eight projects listed above through the World Development Appeal.

The World Development Appeal is unique in that all money donated goes to Tearfund and Christian Aid to help with various projects around the world. Please give generously to help alleviate poverty through sustainable development. There is an envelope included with this edition of the Eagle Wing Newsletter which you can leave in or send to the church office. It can also be left on the collection plate. As Christians, we endeavor to follow Jesus' example. By supporting the World Development Appeal we can shine a light into darkness and show God's encompassing love to those most in need. Thank you.

(Dr Michael Steele, Chair of GPC Mission Committee)



Alan and Margaret Chestnutt would like to thank everyone who helped and supported them during Alan's recent illness. Your thoughts and prayers were very much appreciated.



You can support this work by donating the usual groceries. Storehouse North Down will be in need after Christmas when stocks are often low. Your generosity with the cupboard essentials is much appreciated.

The Lighthouse School in Gaza

The Rev John Angle is just back from the West Bank once again where he had been with Christians in Bethlehem, Zababde, and also made a visit to the border with Gaza.

The Trust is continuing to support civilians with food and medical supplies through well-established contacts on the ground.

The Trust is immensely grateful for our help, which over the years has helped run the Bethlehem Bible College, Zababde, and the Lighthouse School in Gaza.

Thank you.



Food being given out to the poor living around the area of the church in tents on the rubble.

Rosalind MacNeice

Hello from Heidi ...

Dear friends at Groomsport,

As we enter the holiday season this year, I remember how special the Christmas was that I spent with you all - between the Carols by Candlelight service, the Christmas morning service, and holiday gatherings, I have so many lovely memories of that time. As always, thank you for the impact you've had on my life and on the lives of all your interns.



As I am in the middle of my last year of my doctoral program in New Testament at Duke University, I am keeping busy with writing my dissertation, teaching Greek, preaching, and starting to discern what will come after this year. I recently completed a full first draft of my dissertation, and I feel so thrilled to see this project start to come together. There will still be lots of edits to go, but I'm getting there! I will graduate in May, and then I promise that I will stop attending school.

Wishing you all the best this Christmas season,

Love,

Heidi Biermann

News from Ryan Pearce

Maggie and I miss you all! It was so lovely to see you this summer and to show my lovely wife around the area.

Each time I return to visit, I am struck by how much I love Groomsport and North Down. It was a great time to visit with you and to catch up after four years away. Much has changed in my life, but I love that GPC seems to stay constant no matter what happens outside of it.



After we returned, I jumped back into my ministry of caring for the people of Danville, California as the Care Pastor at our church. This usually includes visits to assisted living homes, hospital visits, pastoral counseling moments with parishioners, and running various programs that are going on in our church. Maggie has been traveling a lot for her work as a pharmaceutical consultant working for Deloitte, so most weeks it has been me and our dog, Theo. Theo is a 2.5 year old, 80lb black lab who might be the most spoiled dog to ever dog. He is our good-est boy!

Personally, Maggie and I are loving living in California. I have picked up mountain biking in our local hills and Maggie has been deeply engaged with a group of friends. My intramural softball team won our town championship a few weeks ago, and I am still flush with excitement about that! I continue renovating our house which we bought last summer and working on my wood working projects.

Oh, and we found out that we are going to be parents!!! Maggie and I will welcome (God willing) a baby boy into our family in late April. We are overjoyed that God answered our prayers for a baby with this little life. Both mom and baby are healthy!

Keep us in your prayers as you continue to be kept in ours.

Grace and peace,

Ryan, Maggie, Theo, and Baby



(Photograph taken by Jonathan Manson)

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