

Derryvolgie life in lockdown



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The chaplaincy team spent the summer preparing protocols and putting the infrastructure in place in order to create as safe an environment as possible. The upgraded Wi-Fi anticipated the reliance of all residents on virtual learning. Derryvolgie (DV) Hall was given the green light to reopen in July and 70 students took the decision to make DV their home during this academic year. Autumn 2020 began with headlines of student raves and apprehension of young people descending on campus neighbourhoods and the risks of outbreak. It was a concerning time for everybody, not least students and their families.

There has been a significant amount of prayer walking encircling the Hall, and we have experienced a year of God's protection, grace and favour despite the challenging restrictions.

Every endeavour working with people has had to operate with increased creativity and flexibility due to pandemic restrictions; this is the zone that chaplaincy has inhabited over the past year. The amazing cohort of Derryvolgie students has helped create an experience of purposeful community, service, fun and growth, regardless of the difficulties.

Our Sunday night connection, 'Vital', was relocated to Fisherwick Presbyterian Church. This incredible space made it possible for 60 to 100 students to gather safely in their 'bubbles', to connect, be encouraged and worship quietly behind masks. This has continued online through the chaplaincy Facebook page in semester two.

We have been able to create rhythms and practices of faith that are incredibly important for young adults. Lynn Guiney, in her role as assistant chaplain, has initiated weekly days of prayer, 24/7 style,

and creatively resourced these to shape a practice of being still, listening, and praying with purpose into the life around us.

In a more typical year, chaplaincy students are encouraged to invest in service projects in south Belfast. With homework clubs, residential homes, and youth gatherings like our international student meals all closed or prohibited, we as a team had to reimagine our practical witness. It has been possible to serve

international students through the distribution of meals. Harnessing the skills of Mulholland's butchers and Fisherwick staff to produce fresh, individual meals, at key dates over the year, we set up distribution sites and gave out the dinners, inviting the 'guests'

to join us on Zoom for a virtual meal together. This was particularly wonderful at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The joy of community at Derryvolgie has been a great consolation during this pandemic and the friendships and encouragement of flat 'bubbles' has been significant. The team, Lynn, Vicky, Danni and Esther, have been amazing, working with resilience, flexibility, and love.

Please keep praying for this generation of young people.

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Please pray:

- Give thanks for the ways in which students have been able to continue their studies, worship, fellowship and outreach during the pandemic.
- Give thanks for the team at Derryvolgie and all they have done.
- Continue to pray for this generation of young people.