

## Opening doors in the west



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**D**uring this year of closed doors and challenges, our Lord has been with us, enabling us to serve and play our part. We have been able to connect through phone calls, prayer chains, WhatsApp, Zoom meetings, weekend 'prayer waves', through pre-recorded and live services.

Lots of church members have taken part in our online services, with some folks reconnecting to church life. A weekend prayer wave (48 hours of continuous prayer with slots filled by church members) ran for most of last year. Our Zoom Bible studies and coffee times were able to connect folks who normally couldn't attend small groups, with our group often including a church member who lives on an offshore island 120km away; another member 60km away and others from even farther afield. We even at times had folks join in online who were ill at home and we could pray for them. Recently, we were able to have new membership classes on Zoom with 13 participants and also share online services with other Galway churches. We have been able to reconnect this year with friends of the church, for example Abusa (Rev) Peter, a magistrate and Presbyterian minister in Malawi who recently led us online in our prayers for others.

It has been a very hard year, and folks have missed meeting in person, praising, and sharing together. I have been humbled by our many medical and healthcare workers, serving others so faithfully. I have also been humbled by the quiet resilience of our members who are asylum seekers, living in often small rooms with their children this whole year; eating, doing school work, sleeping, in one space – often one room – and still seeking to join us on Sunday for Zoom times, even though their Wi-Fi would often cut out.

Many church members have been helping loved ones in other countries, and some are still shaken by messages received last year from distressed family members, who were hungry and unable to work. We do pray for our teenagers and students, especially those from abroad; it has been particularly lonely and challenging

for them. We are thankful for Christ's presence, grace and mercy and continue to pray for loved ones in countries where many are suffering.

We felt excited and nervous when we reopened in May, but ready to see where God will lead. When discouraged, I remember the words of a newcomer to the church last summer, who I first met at the door of the church one day and who later came to services faithfully. She said she loved the church services in the building, Christ had been drawing her near and she loved being there with other believers. God's Spirit is always on the move, opening doors, opening hearts, opening lives.

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#### Please pray:

- Pray that we will follow the Lord in outreach, love and service and in new ways this summer.
- As we have services in the building and limited numbers able to attend, pray that we may be able to install a camera and live stream services and reach out in various ways.
- Pray for our new student and youth leaders and for our teenagers and students, that they would grow in faith, and that we would be able to start these ministries in new ways again.