

CHAPTER TEN | Pandemics and Parenting

"But I trust in your unfailing love, my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me." Psalm 13:5-6 NIV



Joel at 4 months old (above) and 1 day old (right).

Joel is Four Months Today!

I don't think any of us could have imagined what 2020 would hold. From the global pandemic to long overdue protests against racial injustice, this has been a whirlwind year so far. For us, this was experienced somewhat differently with the arrival of Joel Christopher Agnew on 4/4/20, weighing in at 9lbs! We are **so grateful to God for his safe arrival**, Hannah was an absolute champion delivering him and feeding him and he has gone from strength to strength. He's a unit, and she is proving to be a great mum!

Joel means **"Yahweh is God,"** declaring his sovereignty over a world in chaos, and over his young life. The powerful and dramatic words of Joel 2 prophesying the day of the Lord and the pouring out of his Spirit on all flesh additionally challenge and inspire us. Finally, we named him for Joel, a wonderful friend and prayer partner over the preceding months, a man who loves the Lord, loves the Scriptures, and moves in the life of the Spirit. We can't think of a better combination of inspiration to pray over his life, in hope he will walk in such ways as he grows in wisdom. Also, "English Joel" (our friend) sent "handsome Joel" (our Joel) a letter for him to read when he's older full of sage advice and warning about his parents!!

Our last 4 months have been mostly getting used to parenting amidst pandemic. Sadly, our mums were unable to visit due to restrictions, and with a two week quarantine in effect both ways we haven't been able to get home yet. However, **our friends here have been as family**. We didn't have to cook a meal for 6 weeks after Joel was born, and have been blessed with regular visits and support of all sorts as the weeks have gone on.



Church and Regent:

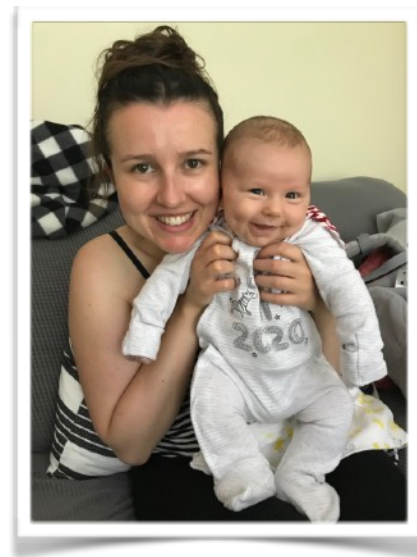
Life Church Vancouver has seen significant changes in these last few months. The church planters and pastors who led the church felt called back to their sending church to take up a position there. Additionally, other church members have left or moved away amidst coronavirus, and it has left us all wondering how to proceed, or if we should instead commission people to other local churches. Pray for us as we help lead the church in the interim, discerning the way ahead.

Studies have been going really well, Hannah finished a GradDip a week before Joel was born! Chris is hoping to do as much as possible of what is left (two semesters) here in Vancouver, but with Covid-19 meaning Regent will be online possibly for the whole year, and uncertainty over our house at home, we may be coming back to NI earlier than we expected. Watch this space!



The place for lament. . .

Something being at Regent has helped us think through is the **place for lament** in our society, our family and our church. In the midst of such worldwide upheaval, perhaps the only adequate initial response is to lament and cry out in anguish at the destruction, distress and deception found everywhere. Peru in particular is reeling from the effects of the pandemic, and just does not have the infrastructure to cope. Friends there have described many people as “gone”, by which they mean succumbed to the virus. **So we lament. This is not a forever posture, but it is a gateway to intimacy** with Jesus, who too lamented his feeling of forsakenness on the cross, echoing Psalm 22. It is also a defiant cry of connection and obedience and a vibrant display of faith to a watching world; there will be a turn, where hope returns to us, and so we trust in him who holds all things together. We see this in the gap between verses 4 and 5 of Psalm 13. Something shifts in the heart of the psalmist, and hope returns. Chris took a course on Daniel in May, where the repetitive thematic refrain is that whilst worldly kingdoms – however beastly – rise and fall, **the kingdom of God endures forever**. He is faithful, and just, and in **his renewal of all things we can trust his goodness**. We hope in this for our friends in Peru.



Join us in giving thanks for. . .

Friends - Particularly some fellow students - Lorna, Abraham and Fiona, Mitch and Nicole, Deborah and David! They have been so good to us in this season; Abraham and Fiona have visited us every week since Joel was born, and we're heading to Galiano Island with them next week (10th Aug) for a few days holidays!

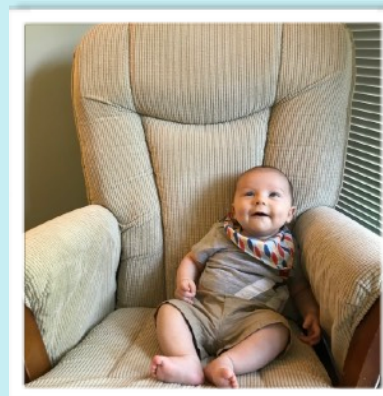
Finance - We were nominated by one of our professors for a scholarship for graduate students, and received enough to cover the rest of our studies here! This is incredible, as we were reliant on Chris working at home in the summers to provide this for the rest of our time. Praise the Lord! Additionally, Chris has received some work opportunities through Regent that have helped bridge the gap.

Healthy baby! - Joel's little life has been so fun so far, getting to know him, his little ways, what he enjoys doing, and most importantly, when he's tiring and needs a break. Who knew you had to make babies go to sleep!!!

Sabbath - Even with Joel arriving, we've maintained a pretty good Saturday rhythm of rest and space, experimenting with nice food, fun and friends. Rain or Shine ice cream (for any of you that know) has been a big feature too!

PRAYER POINTS

- **For tenants** - our current tenants are due to move out at the end of August. If you know anyone who is looking for somewhere to live in Lisburn from September-May/June, let us know! We can't afford to live in both places.
- **For Peru** - the numbers are staggering, and brutal to read about. With the Psalmist we cry out "How long, Lord?"
- **For future plans** - our eyes and hearts turn towards what may come after Regent. Please begin to pray for our listening to the voice of God in this season especially!
- **For Life Church** - for discernment and wisdom as we seek the best way ahead for the church in this next season.



Sitting in the armchair like his grandfathers!