
ST, TIMOTHY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

ESM

*Pandemic
Reflections*



INTRODUCTION

It's been one whole year since the devastating COVID-19 virus took its grip on the world, and changed everyone's lives forever. The various members of the St. Timothy Presbyterian Church's community certainly weren't excluded from this.

We decided to ask certain members from different groups in our community to write their "pandemic reflections." They would provide an insight on how this global pandemic affected them; showing the state of minds of members in this community from all walks of life.

The 3 questions they were given were:

- 1. How did the pandemic affect you and what challenges and struggles did you face as a result of it?*
- 2. How has your faith changed or helped you through the pandemic?*
- 3. How has worship or the community helped you through the pandemic?*

We hope you will enjoy reading these reflections and get an idea of how this pandemic impacted our community in innumerable ways.

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HELPLESSNESS, COMFORT AND **RELIEF**

Hannah Kim, *Kids Church*

How the pandemic affected me was when my mom told me I wasn't allowed to go outside or even see my close friends. A struggle I faced was probably knowing that millions of people could be dying right this second and we don't know what to cure.

Something that helped me get through the pandemic was knowing that my family and friends is safe and no one got hurt.

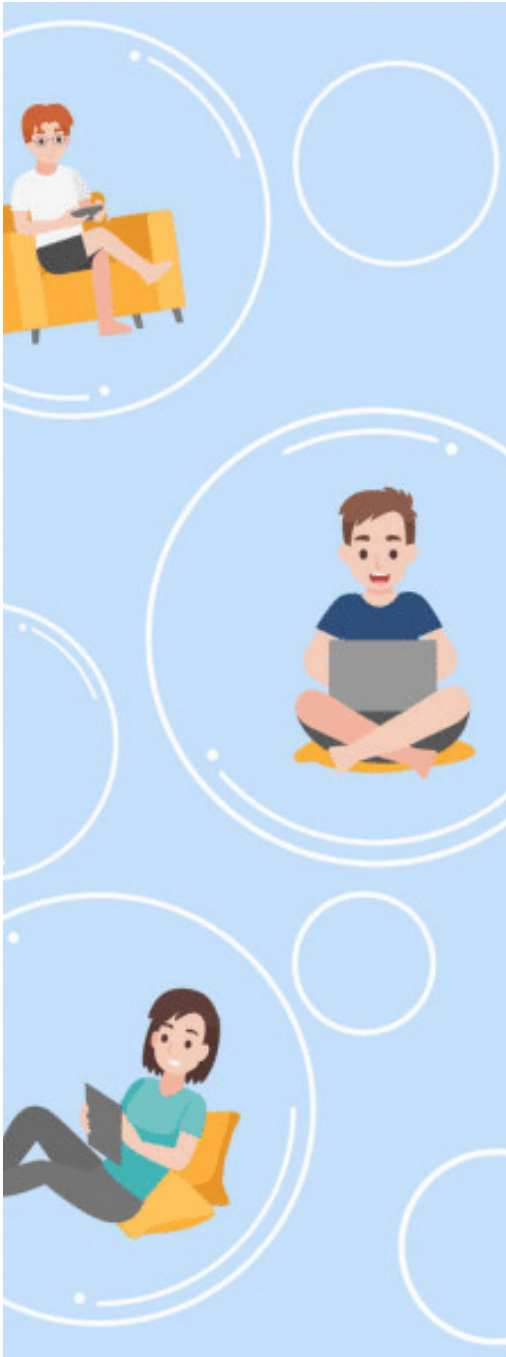
In the morning when I go to church I think about the pandemic and how it might have gotten to the people of the church but when I see all my friends and the adults are still safe I am glad and I don't have to worry about it that much.





GOD'S PROTECTIVE SHIELD

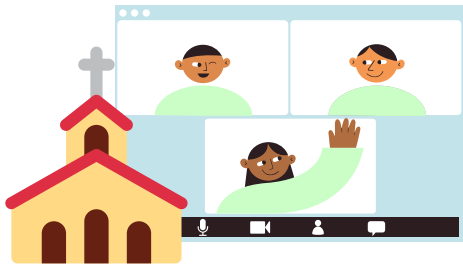
Lucas Hwang, *Kids Church*



School. School affected me during this global pandemic because I had to switch to online school and I'm not that good at using tech. Regular life things are harder too because I can't see my family, friends, and more. What I miss the most is that I can't go to church. :(I don't like wearing a mask, it has given me some weird things on my face and it shortens my breath.

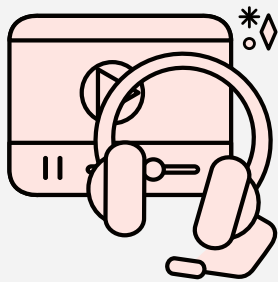
My faith helped me stay alive and safe during this pandemic, and taught me how to be strong and more brave than I have ever been.

The worship community helped me by teaching me about God and all the good things he did. When I learn about God, It feels like he is a shield that's blocking the virus from coming in.



GETTING THROUGH BY FAITH

Olivia Kim, *Kids Church*



There are a lot of challenges and struggles that I had to go through this past year. Some of them were getting used to masks, entertaining myself, and being bored, sad, mad because I was in a confined space. Getting used to these things was a big struggle, but I got through it!

God helped me in a lot of ways. He protected me and many others, He listened and responded to my prayers. I prayed that everyone in my family would be safe and he kept them safe! I always know that he is going to be there for me and everyone else.



Church helped me a lot! While doing virtual church I got to do a lot of different games that I can't do in church. I knew that church was always going to be there every Sunday and I liked having someone to talk to every week and I really enjoyed that.

THANK YOU

Caitlin Chung, *Hi-C*

From a personal perspective, I am so lucky to be able to say that I wasn't deeply affected by the pandemic in an unfortunate or painful way. Instead, I was able to finally take a break from enduring a repetitive, mindless, and tiring lifestyle. I don't think I realized what was wrong with how I was choosing to live my life until the pandemic hit, and for that I'm extremely grateful. I'm so glad to have realized what was truly important in my life, while putting my priorities straight for only the better. That being said, I'm not the kind of person who refuses to see the negatives and challenges of a situation, while simply ignoring them to pretend that life is good, and that I'm completely fine. No, I will reluctantly admit that it wasn't easy for me either.

One of the main challenges for me, as a student, was going through online school. First, however, I'd like to just mention that I'm naturally a homebody, introvert, and I'm also pretty good at keeping myself busy, alone. Therefore, I feel like I've been coping with the lockdown and this situation as a whole better than most kids my age.

Anyway, online school isn't as bad as I had expected, but also not as easy to endure as I thought it would be. I mean, not having to wake up hours before school begins, picking something to wear, and going on the bus to and from school sounds great, but at the same time, it feels a bit more lonely and even less motivating than I may have wished.

I miss seeing my friends everyday, laughing with people over truly stupid things, and feeling this sense of drive, motivation, and even stress. As a teenager my age, I believe that stimulation and new environments/experiences are crucial to my development, but as you all can imagine, that's obviously been lacking during this pandemic



Another kind of struggle that I feel a lot of teenagers have been going through is not getting too deep inside of their heads. Not falling into that hole of fear, anxiety, and hopelessness, and simply being unable to see the light in life. I'm more of a person who enjoys being alone, but through this pandemic, I've been uncovering so many more parts of myself that I've never seen before. One of which being that I can't actually be alone for too long, and that I do long for social interaction once in a while. Plus, I've learned I'm more vulnerable to my thoughts and worries than I have always believed, but I won't view it as something to be ashamed of, rather something I can grow from.

Lastly, a more petty kind of inconvenience would be dealing with my siblings, and my parents every single day. It's honestly not too bad, but there are definitely moments where I lose control over my emotions and lash out, saying things I would later regret. I've been getting closer with my family for sure, but the idea of personal space and silence has become almost non-existent ever since we've been forced to stay at home in lockdown. I won't worry too much though, since as human beings we should adapt sooner or later.



One statement I can say for sure, without a doubt, is that my faith has become stronger ever since the pandemic, and that I would not have been able to get through it as smoothly as I did without such an anchor.

I've mentioned this in several different reflections already, but I don't at all mind repeating myself. An aspect of my faith that has undoubtedly developed throughout this year is my sense of connection and awareness with God. I started off the year of the pandemic by jotting down at least 5 things I'm grateful for each day in a journal, repeatedly remembering all the blessings in my life, and thanking God for being there. It was a small act, one that I have unfortunately stopped doing, but I can't deny that it was powerful.

Later on in the year, especially during the internship, I began to communicate more easily with God, being more direct, sincere, and less ashamed and embarrassed. I felt vulnerable, but in a way that was comforting and all the way freeing. I believe I've opened my eyes to a more meaningful kind of life as well. Obviously my faith journey is still in progress, but by beginning to involve myself more in my faith, relating it to my life at every moment, I've started to feel much less distant, passive, and disconnected with God and my life as a whole.



Without my faith during a time like this, I truly believe I would be all the more susceptible to falling into a very dark place, where it may take me a very long while to see the light. My faith has prevented from feeling anxious at every moment, worrying over all the little parts of my life, and feeling so tired and hopeless every single day. I don't feel as alone either, and I know how loneliness can easily overcome and hurt a person, hitting directly at their core.

I'm not sure how many people can relate, but Sundays have become one of the most eventful days out of the week, so consistently, ever since the pandemic. I mean, Sundays have always been very eventful and exciting days way before the pandemic. However, every day, when we're limited to doing either work or repeating another hobby we've been doing for so long already, I'd say Sundays have become much more thrilling and stimulating than they've ever been before.

I look forward to seeing new faces, hearing new voices during worship, seeing a world through my screen different from the one I live in every single day. I've noticed that it's become so easy to limit your perspective of life, and to strictly limit your possibilities by constantly exercising a black and white mindset.

I think it's safe to say that staying at home all day undeniably has effects on your mind, and not in the most positive way either.

I almost forgot to mention, but there's also the power of praise, music, and singing. I'm not the most talented singer, as my family members know very well already, but I do enjoy it, and I love music as well. When I get the opportunity to praise on Sundays, in the comfort and security of my home, I feel free to enjoy myself and sing to my heart's content. Singing together, even if it's virtually, has a way of lifting your spirits.



In terms of community, I am so grateful to the hi-c, to the preschool group, and to all the members of this church that I interact with very often. One of the main reasons why my social skills haven't been declining too much, and why I don't feel so alone and unmotivated is because of such a wonderful community I can rely on. As an exec, I've grown so much, I've learned so much, and I've begun to see what a community is truly for and how it can bless people, while making them feel loved, precious, and seen. This community has allowed me to feel deeply connected with others, despite being so far away physically.



I don't know any other way to say this, but I'm so so grateful for the people in my life, in this community who have the patience to listen to my never-ending stories, deal with my slightly annoying traits, who allow me to care for them, help me grow and be better, and are simply there, available and unwavering.

To be honest, I'm not sure who'll be reading this, and this may seem a little out of the blue, ambiguous, and indirect, but thank you so much. Thank you for caring, listening, and laughing, thank you for taking the time to be there, helping when you didn't have to, and most importantly thank you for simply being you throughout this entire year. I want to sincerely thank the people around me, who have helped support me through this entire pandemic, whether you may be aware of it or not.

Thank you for teaching me that we're much more connected to each other than we may believe, much less different, and much more precious to others than we may think. Thank you for teaching me that we're never alone.



RECOGNIZING THE PRESENCE OF GOD



Charley Ngo, *Hi-C*

The pandemic changed my lifestyle a lot. The biggest difference probably being having to do school from home and a lot of other things from home. In a lot of ways, life during the pandemic has been quite nice. I am very lucky to be able to be safe at home, that everyone in my family is safe and healthy, and that we haven't been struggling too much throughout the



pandemic. I think I adapted pretty well to all the changes that I had to deal with. I have been able to do a lot of thinking and self-reflecting. I have been

able to pick up on new hobbies and rediscover old ones. Online school has been easy and best of all, I didn't have

to commute for hours on the subway! One thing that I have struggled with a little is getting good sleep and rest.

I found myself feeling very restless and tense at night and my mind would race as I tried to fall asleep. Another thing that happened during the pandemic was I became a lot more anxious around people. For example, when I go on walks through a park and there are a lot of people there, the whole time I walk through that area, I would feel very tense and uneasy. I hope that this doesn't affect me too much when things start to get better and I start to see friends and family outside of my household.



My faith has really changed and developed throughout the pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, my faith wasn't really a big part of my life and I felt pretty distant from God. Even before the pandemic, God didn't really seem like a big part of my life and I only really thought about my faith during the couple of hours I spent at church. My faith was kind of only defined by big moments I had during times like retreats. With so much more time to think about things during lockdown, I started to really struggle with my



faith. I felt lost because I didn't have a good grounding of my faith and I didn't really understand my own faith.

The first Bible study we had as a Hi-C was on the book of Jonah.

During the first session, we looked at calling and the big question

was, "Am I avoiding my life or engaging in my life?" I knew as I

listened that I was most definitely avoiding my life and I had to change it, but the thought of it was so physically and mentally and emotionally sickening. I didn't

want to face my life and all the messy things that came along with it. It wasn't

even just the pandemic that I was dealing with, it was my lifestyle before the

pandemic as well. I remember strongly not wanting to continue attending the

Bible study and just instead spend my Friday nights listening to music in my

room by myself. But wouldn't that have been the exact opposite of what I was

supposed to do? I'm very glad I did continue going, because it really challenged

me to stretch my perspective about God instead of trying to fit him in a box.



Another big thing that changed in my faith was my understanding of prayer. This happened primarily through my experience during the Summer Internship. The

study we did on Brother Lawrence helped me simplify my understanding of

prayer from something big, overwhelming, and conceptual to a

conversation with someone who is closer than I would have thought. I

began to recognize and feel God's presence throughout my daily tasks. I

feared that after the internship it would all be gone and I would snap back

into a reality where prayer was a constant struggle, but it didn't leave. I didn't

even have to forcefully remind myself of this understanding, it just stayed

naturally.



Finally, as a Hi-C, we have done studies for important seasons in the Christian calendar, such as Advent and Lent, and they have really helped me to understand

these seasons. Normally, I wouldn't pay much attention to them, but

now they definitely have a much greater meaning. Lent has been a little

bit of a time of struggle for me, especially in the beginning, but even

throughout the loudest, weariest, and most chaotic times, by creating a

space for God, I was able to find a sense of peace.



The St. Tim's community, and especially the Hi-C community has been a constant for me throughout the pandemic. It is a place where I could continually go back to and people would always be there. The community helped me deal with physical separation and isolation. At first, the isolation didn't really make me feel alone and I quite enjoyed it, but slowly as time went on it really started to get to me. I am glad I always had people to see and go back to weekly and the effort the church went to keep our community close and connected inspired me to continue the effort by reaching out to people in my community that I didn't really talk to much before the pandemic.

Despite the physical separation, I think I have felt the closest to the Hi-C throughout this pandemic after becoming an exec. I have been the most engaged with the Hi-C than ever and as a result, I have enjoyed time with the Hi-C more. I have also been able to feel most like myself with the help of the Hi-C.





RENEWAL AND RESURGENCE

Emily Kim, *Hi-C*

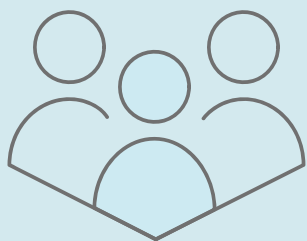


I've been lucky to not have faced any severe challenges as a result of the pandemic. If anything, the pandemic was a welcome change of pace to my busy life. For the first time in a while, I had the time and space to really embrace the present moment instead of getting caught up in anxieties and worries. During the early stages of the pandemic, I was able to press the reset button on my life as a whole. Therefore, even when I did reflect on my past and future, I was able to do so with peace that had developed out of gratitude for and contentment with my present. My physical, mental, emotional and spiritual states improved as I took the time to focus on myself.

If anything, the biggest challenge that I have faced as a result of the pandemic has been reintegrating myself into "normal" life. I had achieved so much peace and contentment during the early part of the pandemic, so resuming my usual life has been tough. Getting thrown right back into school (especially now that I am in grade 12), also threw me right back into worries, stress and constant business. It has been frustrating to see the aspects of myself that had improved during the early pandemic slowly deteriorate to their original states. On top of that, social isolation has caused me to drift away from many of my friends and acquaintances, leaving me to shoulder the reinstated negatives of "normal" life all on my own.



I believe my faith and relationship with God has matured as a result of the pandemic. As I mentioned before, much of my summer was filled with reflection. I took long daily walks, began journaling, reading 'philosophical' books and participating in the summer intern studies. Therefore, throughout the summer, I had time to really confront my doubts about God and actively search for answers. Through my efforts, I think I have begun to understand God on a rational level. I have begun to see the role and necessity for God in my life rather than the blind "faith" that I had before. Now, I feel much more confident in my faith, and have even had many discussions (debates) with my non religious friends about the logic and validity of religion. Having this new found faith had provided me with new confidence, not just about God, but in myself and my own life. I have become more accepting of myself, my past and the things that are out of my control.



The St.Tim's community has been the cornerstone of my ability to stay happy during the pandemic. Through the summer internship, I was given much needed structure, social stimulation and direction to my life. Also, it exposed me to many world and community issues which helped me remain grateful and humble throughout the pandemic.

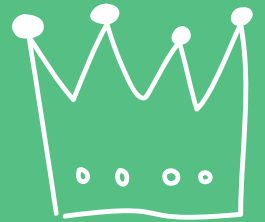
Also, The Hi-C was a prominent source of friendship and comradery during an otherwise pretty isolating time. The many virtual events that I participated in and planned during the pandemic was a welcome reminder of the joy I get from being around people. Playing games, joking around and sharing my experiences with them never failed to lift my mood, even when things got stressful and busy.

AN UNPREDICTABLE LIFE

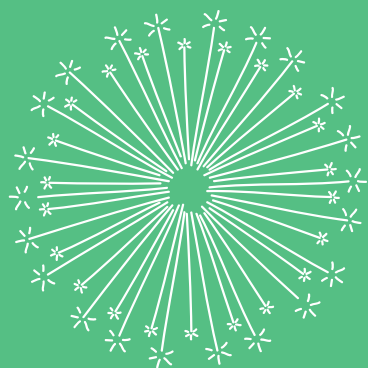
Gene Song, *Hi-C*

Honestly, at the start of the pandemic, I was thankful for it. Before it came, I was extremely stressed out at school so it provided a much welcomed break.

However as the pandemic went on for months, I definitely felt feelings of angst, mostly from online school, and all the new challenges that came with it. I remember how weird learning at home felt at first. Navigating the online platforms was strange and the first live online classes were a chore. Online learning is a double-edged sword. Depending on the subject, you either have all the time in the world to do your assignments, or it's a test every other day. The main challenge was the inconsistency. For example, school reopening with a whole new format in quads, using various different online platforms, and being prepared for school to close once again. All this unpredictability was definitely a challenge.



Around the time of September last year, I found myself drifting from God. Hearing all the bad news around the world definitely didn't help either. It eventually got to the point where I really didn't believe in him, and thought that if there really was a God, it was simply one that's a spectator that enjoys watching some people win while also enjoying watching some others suffer. With time and through talking with the Hi-C in our online meetings, my spiritual state started to get better. It wasn't a sudden change and I didn't even notice it, but it all became better. Right now, I feel my faith has been restored.



The Hi-C community definitely helped me a lot during this pandemic. Interacting with them in worship, bible studies, and Friday gatherings, were all great in giving me that much-needed human interaction throughout this past year. I'm very thankful that it provides me with times to share whatever I was going through at any given moment. I'm very glad that the Hi-C community was able to stay very connected even during these circumstances.



STRIVING FOR A CALM HEART

Kayla Rho, *Hi-C*

The biggest way the pandemic affected me is through my school life. I wasn't able to experience a proper senior year in high school and missed out on many opportunities that almost everyone has gone through in high school. I wasn't able to hang out with my friends or have any senior year events. My classes were especially hard since it was mostly online and this impacted my mental health quite a bit.

During the pandemic, I was given the chance to reflect more on my faith since I had a lot of time to be alone. This allowed me to calm my heart when times were difficult and gave me a sense of security because I knew that God was always there for me. He was someone who

would understand what I was going through even if I didn't say it aloud. This really helped me get through some tough times during the pandemic.

The community was always asking how I was during the pandemic and whenever I said times were hard they would always listen to me and offer to pray for me. I really appreciated this since it made me realize that I am not alone and others are going through the same thing I am. Going to worship every Sunday allowed me to reflect on my situation and since the content was so relatable it let me solve many problems I have been going through during the pandemic. I am very grateful for both worship and the community in St. Timothy Presbyterian Church.



PEACE AMIDST THE CHAOS

Liam Johnstone, *Hi-C*



Going through this pandemic was pretty hard for me, I feel that I struggled with a lot of loneliness and boredom from being stuck at home basically 24/7.

This pandemic has pretty much stopped me from doing most things I enjoy, but luckily going to the church weekly was a time for me to reflect about everything going on and have some peace in some of the chaos we're going through.



DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

April Chia, *College*

The past year has definitely been a very different and interesting year. Everything in my life just came to a halt, my school was on break, I wasn't able to go to church, I couldn't meet up with my family or friends. It felt like all my social interactions were taken away from me. All of these factors have impacted my mental health in a negative way. My mental health is at an all-time low, while my social anxiety is skyrocketing.

I didn't have the strongest faith before the pandemic started, but the pandemic has definitely affected my faith a lot. I went through weeks without even thinking about faith. I think I relied heavily on going to church every week, being in a faith community in-person, and going to retreats a couple of times a year. Without doing any of those, I feel like my faith is non-existent. I've realized that my faith is very community-based, and not self-based.



A BLESSED LIFE

David Kim, *College*



This pandemic has impacted my life in many ways and has really opened up my eyes to see how blessed I am. Although there have been many challenges and many things I haven't been able to do this past year, I've also come to appreciate new things in life that I never would've reflected on before. Living away from home, being separated from friends and family and staying inside doing online school has definitely impacted my daily routine and lifestyle. Often days would zoom by, and I would feel bored, restless and stressed being locked in all day. Not being able to see and hang out with my friends in person was probably the biggest challenge for me, as university life is all about meeting new people and spending time with your friends. Zoom calls, face timing and messaging are great and all, but there's nothing like meeting up in person, laughing, joking around and sharing how you've been. Online school slowly became more mundane and repetitive, with lots of weekly discussions, quizzes and assignments being our weekly objectives. Not a day goes by where I don't picture in my head and imagine how nice it would be to hang out with my friends in person and I always hope that this would all end soon. I think the hope of that and realizing how lucky I am in spite of all the troubles, has really helped me during this pandemic and I'm looking forward to this summer and hoping for the best.



i am
grateful



DIFFERENT JOURNEYS

Jocelyn Chung, *College*

To be honest I was so minimally impacted by the pandemic I don't think I can honestly say I struggled or had challenges through it. Of course I was unable to see friends and family and I was bored a lot of the time, but I wouldn't say that that's a genuine struggle that I had. The most significant challenge was starting my program online I think. I was unable to meet friends and professors in person which was a shame but I'm just looking forward to meeting them later on!

I don't know if I can say that my faith helped me through the pandemic. I think it changed a little bit in the sense that I have had much more time to actually think about what I believe and why and kind of wrestle and struggle with these different thoughts that I had,

but I don't think I can honestly say that my faith helped me through any challenges I faced.

I think just knowing that I have a community that I love to fall back on has been really nice. It's easy to feel lonely when we all have to stay at home, but knowing that I had friends from church who I could reach out to and catch up with was comforting to know.





THERE IS A LIGHT

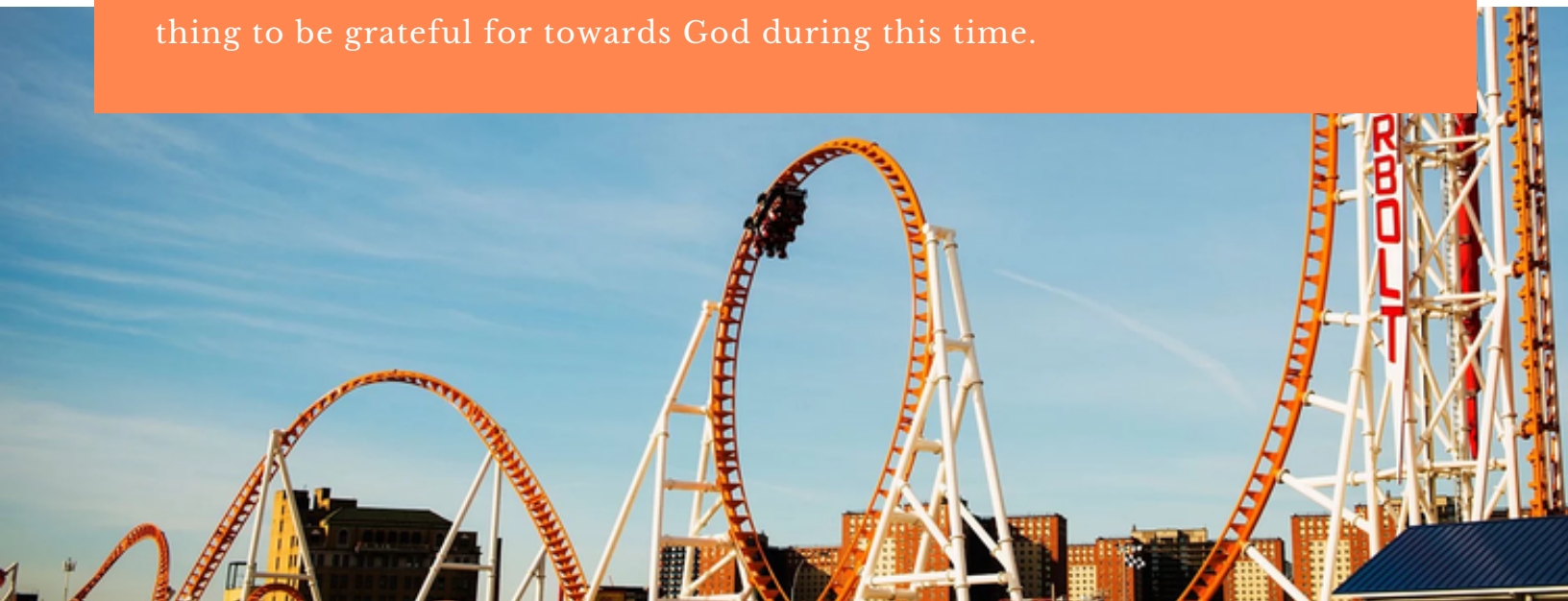
Jonathan Chung, *College*

I have definitely grown in my faith because of this pandemic. With day-to-day life coming to a halt, I began to see and appreciate all the blessings from God that were once hidden behind life's daily routine. Ever since I entered university there was something that I needed to get done every day. Whether I was at school working on assignments and studying for exams, or on co-op working all day just to come home exhausted, there was never a time until the pandemic when I could stop and really count my blessings. However, the major turning point in my faith during this pandemic was when I decided to really pursue God. With many reflections, prayer nights with my university fellowship, and bible studies with Pastor Dave, I began to recognize God's goodness throughout my entire life. It was crazy to me that I had forgotten all of the times that God was with me when times were hard and delivered me from those dark places. I now know God was always with me in the past, is with me right now, and will continue to be there in the future. So now I'm excited for the future because there is a light at the end of this tunnel and I can't wait to see what God has in store for us!

CONFLICTING FAITH

Monica Park, *College*

During this pandemic, I think my faith went through ups and downs. During the start of the pandemic when everything first started to close down and everyone was stuck in lockdown for those couple of months, I found myself not really thinking about my faith or God. Looking back at it now, it may have been because I didn't really want to add more thoughts on top of everything that I was struggling with back then. However, these past few months, I found myself questioning God about not so much my own life, but on the bigger issues that have been going on in our society. Hearing and seeing all the incidents that have been happening these days, just makes me question why all of these negative and heartbreaking incidents are happening. All of this questioning led me to think back on how I've always been taught that God does everything for a reason, but then I would think is there any good reason for the pandemic we are in, or for all of the heartbreaking things that are happening within our society, this being an ongoing question that I'm still trying to figure out. On the positive side, I've been feeling extremely grateful to God for watching over my family and keeping all of us safe, healthy and happy. Every day on the news I would see the case numbers increasing, but thankfully my loved ones have been safe and healthy, which is probably the biggest blessing and biggest thing to be grateful for towards God during this time.





REPETITIVE CYCLES AND FAITH

Taebin Kim, *College*

As a student, the pandemic has affected my school life the most - I have had to be at home as I graduated from high school and whole first year at university. Not only did I have to adapt into home learning, but also I had to overcome a situation where I have very little social life. I was able to bear it for the first a few months. However, as school went on, it was too overwhelming at times - I felt lonely and bored for most of the time. Also, it has been mentally challenging to accept the fact that there is most likely nothing new in tomorrow - I would be at home all day and that is it.

I believe that it has been my faith that has allowed to me look at the positives around me during the pandemic. I have been able to look at the whole situation differently with my faith - this is very frustrating, yet at the same time, it is very interesting and a unique period of time that I will ever go through in my life. Having such a perspective has allowed me to be more cautious on what is going on inside my mind and eventually, to almost enjoy this situation where I can learn something that I would not have learned before. Like I mentioned before, I believe all of this was possible because of my faith.

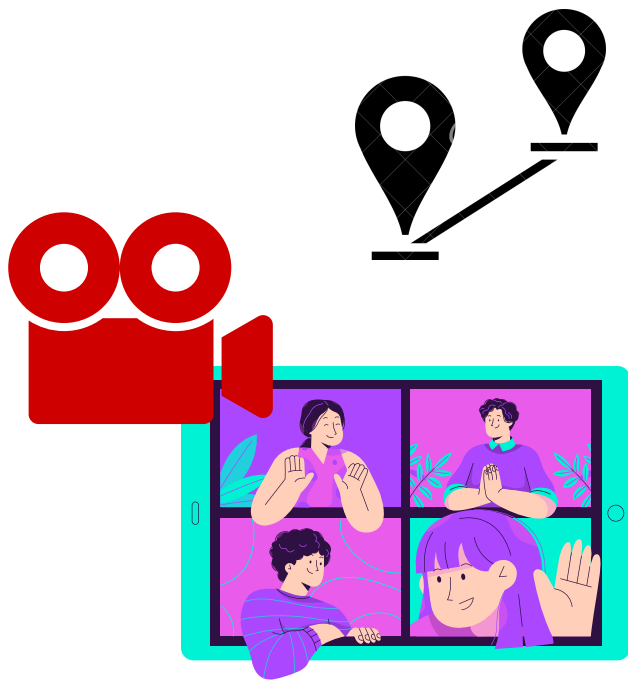


GRATITUDE AMIDST CHALLENGES

Brim Lee, *Young Families*

The pandemic definitely a lot of ups and downs, but overall I am happy that our family is safe and healthy. We obviously spent a lot of time together as a family, and that was the one thing that was pretty amazing, was to be able to spend all that time with the kids, and build stronger relationships with them. The challenge of balancing work, childcare, schooling, household chores, cooking, etc. was pretty demanding but I am still thankful for having a roof over our heads, that we didn't lose our jobs, and that we were able to enjoy spending more time together.





I feel like my faith has been challenged during the last year with the pandemic forcing me to think about other priorities, and while I could have spent more time focused on my faith, I felt like I didn't give my faith a lot of proper attention. I also prayed less this year, which made me feel more distant with God.

During the early days of the pandemic, there was a lot that the staff and Session had to do, but I'm so grateful for all the hard work by the staff and volunteers to keep worship going. I have heard other churches still doing pre-recorded worship, and I am thankful that we have the opportunity to worship live with other members of the congregation during the past year. It was also nice to meet during last summer with the other YF's, and be able to share experiences, and also let the kids play together, as that was such a treat given we had not seen each other in so long. I know it was really meaningful for the children as well to see their church friends.



FLICKER OF HOPE

Jenny Kim, *Young Families*

Like most, this pandemic has demanded an unrelenting endurance that has led Uno and I to some real burnout. For me, the WFH has been a privilege and convenience, but has also been socially isolating while still having to navigate absurd workplace politics in an awkward virtual capacity. Uno has been on the frontlines fighting this pandemic from day one, and has witnessed an immense amount of trauma with Covid patients and his colleagues. Parenting the girls requires 101% of each of us, but it's been tough when we are both functioning on such minimal reserves. So living with the in-laws has definitely been helpful with the childcare, and I am truly thankful for that...but at the same time, ain't gonna lie - sometimes it's felt

oppressive. We've been house hunting as of late but the market has been relentless and ruthless on an unprecedented level during this pandemic. While I have shame about how much this has been impacting my mental health, I also realize how much a home is beyond a material possession – it plays an enormous role in our sense of stability and safety in life. Like any deep struggle in life, it has been very hard to open up about this to others and to feel like anyone really cares or understands what we are going through.



It was difficult losing Uno's halmunee over the holidays. When we found out she was positive for Covid, rather than just worrying about her health, we had to also consider if we were exposed since Uno, his brother, and mother had all been close contacts with her. I wished that halmunee could have passed from anything but Covid, just so her death did not have to be included in the numbers. Something about it seems so cold and inhuman, that her life could be reduced to a statistic when she lived such a full and wonderful life.



In all of this, I've been reflecting on how my worldview has really shifted. My baseline has usually been fairly optimistic, and I can have some persistence in noticing the goodness in humanity amidst strife. These days, it's difficult to ignore how in our personal and broader spheres, the powerful are greedy, manipulative, and controlling, ultimately at the expense of powerless who bear the consequences. As a Christian, I am supposed to find my hope in Christ, but I've been struggling to make sense of how this translates in a practical way into the real world. But somehow I can always find a tiny flicker of hope somewhere within, and I guess that is faith wrestling through against all odds. I'm so thankful for that.

Worship has ever more become an outlet and opportunity to just humbly come before God. To find rest and comfort. I am so grateful for the St. Tim's community which is like a second family.





HELLOS & GOODBYES

Nicole Paik, *Young Families*

Having our first child during the pandemic had its challenges. Everything we hoped to do while being pregnant (going to ultrasounds together, baby shower, babymoon) had its limits and restrictions. I always imagined having family at the hospital for the birth of my baby but what should have been a memorable experience we could not have. Fortunately, once she was born we were able to get the help we needed. Certainly a strange time to be raising our first as it isn't quite what we imagined but we realized being parents is quite restrictive anyway and feel blessed to be in lockdown with our baby.

The most challenging time during this pandemic was the sudden passing of my grandfather. With no visitors allowed at the hospital and knowing he was suffering all alone really broke us. We were only able to see him when he returned home for his final days but he was hardly coherent. He was truly the pillar of our family and loved by so many. Having restrictions while celebrating the life

he lived was painful too. He deserved so much more... But I feel comforted knowing he is playing golf everyday and keeping a close eye on us all.

I've always been grateful to be a part of such a large, tight-knit community but particularly through this pandemic it has been a blessing. What could have been a very lonely pregnancy and motherhood journey, people from St. Tim's reached out via text, calls and social media to congratulate and support me greatly throughout this process. Sunday worship through Zoom allowed me to see familiar faces which brought a sense of comfort and connection I craved.



THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE DIFFERENT

The Ngo Family, *Young Families*

The pandemic affected our family in many ways both positively and negatively.

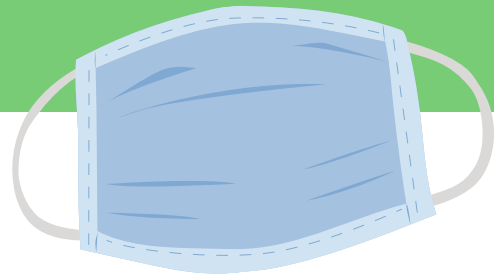
The positive impacts that came out of the pandemic are:

- spending more time as a family doing fun activities such as having board games night while drinking hot chocolate and eating popcorn/chips, having bonfire nights and taking long walks to enjoy God's creations
- every winter as a family we would go skiing throughout the season, but since ski resorts were under restrictions to open, we ended up building a skating rink which we enjoyed almost everyday
- making sourdough bread, we continue baking our own bread since
- enjoy the quiet slower paced lifestyle that we haven't encountered in many many years
- we learned to appreciate the finer things in life that we would normally take advantage of

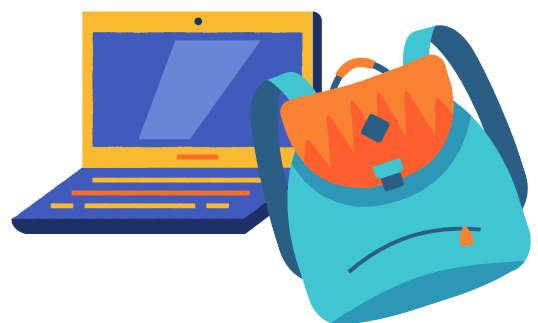


The not so good things that came out of the pandemic:

- not being able to meet with family especially during special occasions. Christmas didn't feel like Christmas without the celebrations and family festivities. Traditions had been broken for the first time ever. It was sad that we weren't able to touch or hug our parents/grandparents or even go in close proximity to them because of the unknown
- not being able to spend time with friends like we used to was a weird feeling
- wearing masks everywhere; it was challenging at first since it makes it harder to breathe
- having to make sure we are appropriately distanced at all times didn't feel normal

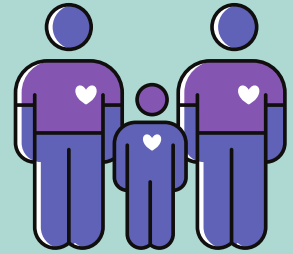


Schooling has changed drastically during the pandemic. It is of great comfort knowing that our school and teachers are following strict regulations to keep covid from spreading through our school. We have not had any cases at our school to date. We have both in-person and online schooling set up so that if we do get sick and have to stay home we do not fall behind in our school work which takes a lot of pressure off.



NEW PARENTS IN A PANDEMIC

Ruth and Steve, *Young Families*



When the pandemic began, what we found most difficult was the idea that a lock down meant that we would be restricted to our own homes, not seeing family and friends. This was a particular challenge a couple months after our daughter, Karis was born. We found ourselves cooped up and unable to share and have fellowship with our church community as well as those who were going through the same life stage as us.

Our faith has been tested and challenged. Despite this pandemic, we had to believe in God's sovereignty and goodness. We came to understand that whether it was a pandemic or any other challenging situation, we needed strength and perseverance to live faithfully each day.

It has been a big blessing to participate in worship service virtually. We are thankful for everyone's efforts to make it possible week after week. We found it particularly encouraging seeing and hearing from other new parents over the past several weeks. Hearing other parents talk about their struggles reassured us that we were not the only ones facing a variety of issues when it comes to raising a baby. Plus, it was so nice to see all the cute babies!



GOD IN CONTROL

Barbara Bai, *Adults*

Aside from the challenges we all faced (i.e. fear, isolation, grief, etc.), I also faced adjusting to living permanently in Canada after 17 years. Being back every summer gave me a false sense that everything is the same as when I left. But the reality is, it's not and I have changed too. Relationships are like living things, they need constant feeding and love. My neglect over 17 years resulted in deep cracks that weren't apparent when I wasn't looking for them. The pandemic made it more difficult but not impossible to reconnect. It took a choice and effort. Wain started calling his mother every morning on his way to work (as part of his daily routine just like brushing his teeth). Their brief chats have connected them to daily news which may seem mundane but are the building blocks to a deeper relationship. It also gives his mom something to look forward to every morning. I also started calling my mom at 8:30am and dad 10:00 am every morning. Older parents like and need routine. There's nothing like talking to our children that brings more joy and comfort.





Our kids, London and Kennedy, have lived on their own since graduating high school over 10 years ago. Every holiday together went too fast and there was always an incompleteness in our lives when we were apart. The pandemic in a way has been a dream come true haha. It has trapped the kids with us without any distractions or friends. We were able to spend every weekend and holiday together. Every moment together still feels like a blessing.

Realizing that God is in control has given me peace. In His time, not mine, He makes all things beautiful. In the end, as in the beginning and middle, I am blessed.

It has been a joy to witness the evolution of St. Timothy throughout the pandemic. Seeing the pastoral and praise teams at church has been so comforting. It is a reminder that the church doors are still open when everything else is closed. I listened to the sermons every week in Korea but there is such a different energy when listening and watching the entire service live! Rev. Simon has some K-Pop dancing moves! I am so impressed with the dedication and talent of the interns and younger generation. They bring hope and energy to the church and are a reflection of the good seeds sown.



UNDER ONE ROOF

Helen Jun, *Adults*

It could have been a very lonely year with my immediate family members in different countries. My husband resides in Korea and my older daughter is away for college in the States. I've been away from the Toronto scene for the last twenty years or so and many friends have inevitably become estranged due to not being able to keep up with 'life' that happened. That would have left Olivia and me in this house to bear the lockdowns alone.

God did not let that happen.

First it was Pixel, the family dog who came to our house. We knew that the March break 2020 would be a long one so we asked my sister's family to have Pixel in my house to entertain us.

Over the summer while Olivia and I visited Korea, my niece Jeeae moved in to take care of Pixel and house-sit for us.

Autumn rolled around and Grace and Mack were looking to purchase a house. When they proposed the idea of them moving in, to stage their condo to sell it, there was some hesitation in my mind. Having to live with these grown nieces, Mack who I didn't know too well, and a toddler running around, I knew it would be challenging at many levels.

This reminded me about ten years ago when I temporarily moved back to Toronto from Korea to stay for two years.

It was just Sam and I and we moved into my sister's place. My parents, my sister's family, and the two of us added up to 7 people living in one bungalow with two bathrooms. It was busy in the house yet I remember never feeling out of place during my stay there. They welcomed me and their hospitality made me feel completely at home.



My husband and I knew it was a chance for me to return all my sister had done for me a decade ago and welcomed Shinae's family to live with us. I braced myself to be patient and to tolerate whatever came my way living with all these people in the house. But to my surprise, it never became a burden. The food we cooked together, the laughter we shared playing games and the joy of watching Audrey and Oivia growing up together were such a blessing. Oliva and I never felt alone.

My faith is weak and I don't know or feel God's presence at all times. But I believe that God is faithful and provides, even when we don't even know what to ask for. He searches our hearts, knows our deepest needs and fulfills them. And looking back I can see how God had blessed me by inviting Pixel, Jeeae, Shinae, Mack, and Audrey to live under one roof to edify one another during this trying period of the Covid pandemic.



GOD WILL SEE US THROUGH

Irene Kim, *Adults*

As a year has passed, since this Pandemic began, Bob n I reflected, on how its affected our family.

Our initial concern was "Financial", as we didn't know when Bob's brothers business, would be able to reopen, and how business would be affected, by ALL new prevention protocols.

After a nice 3 month rest, they were back in business! By no means is business the same, but with CERB, Mortgage Deferral, and our Line of Credit...Financially we survived!

My personal struggle:

MAJOR BOB KIM WITHDRAWAL!!

☹☹☹

When thinking how this Pandemic has changed our faith...it really hasn't.

Our faith was already truly tested 5 years ago, when I was hospitalized.

God was there then, and we didn't question, where He was through this Pandemic? We knew confidently, that God would see us through this Pandemic, as He sees us through everything! ☺

For most, people were sick of being stuck at home. Restaurants were closed or limited. I'd imagine the dining experience would probably suck too? Our family already had to make HUGE adjustments, as I can't just go out anytime I want, and I'm used to being stuck at home all the time. We rarely go to restaurants, as I hate eating in public! But we sure miss AYCE (All You Can Eat) Sushi ☹☹☹☺

The only part of this Pandemic, that affected us, was not being able to have our monthly gatherings, with our friends!

Though we LOVED ALL the family time, making bubble tea, having games night, baking, movie nights, and MANY karaoke nights...my lemon Soju didn't taste like Norai-bangs (like I remember...[])

Bob loved the CLEAR calendar []. He's loving ALL the sleep (but it's NEVER enough)! He has so many new found hobbies! Wood working, Sewing, Refinish, building firepit, Designing shoes, making Tshirts, mugs, and Raptorizing EVERYTHING! Soon, he'll PIMP MY RIDE with "IRENE'S WHEELCHAIR"! [][][][]

He's been DEFINITELY keeping busy, with ALL this free time! He ALWAYS wants to just stay home! I'm home ALL week, so I fill our weekends OUT! I guess this is "pay back", for 5 years of hobbies, he NEVER had a chance to do....[] [] [] []

Sometimes I wonder, did God answer Bob's prayer for rest?[]

In all honesty, we joke...but we pray for those who are suffering, or lost loved ones through this Pandemic. We're not trying to make light of the situation. But, our family knows God ALWAYS prevails, and we LAUGH in the meantime.

How do we worship????

LOUD!!!! Especially, during praise! We hook up the laptop to the TV, and I have Bob turn up the speakers!!! I wanna feel as if we're LIVE at church! We get JIGGY with Simon MSN !!![]

We feel ya MSN! We feel the Holy Spirit! AMEN!!![] []

And a special SHOUT OUT to Josh Kim, for acknowledging that not ALL of us can "rise", for the Last song! [] [] [] [] [] [] But, I still throw down seated!!! [] []

LET GO, LET GOD

Josh Kim, *Adults*

I've always innately been a person that likes to feel in control. This trait has made me very successful in my career (since I work in project management) but has been a difficult one to manage in the rest of my life. This pandemic has only intensified my struggles in this regard with the future being unclear to everyone across the globe. The feeling of uncertainty has been overwhelming and not something I was able to cope with very well in the early days of the pandemic. Over the course of the last year I've trained and learned how to trust in God and this has immensely helped my anxiety. There has been a simple phrase that has stuck with me this year - "Let go, let God"

My faith has truly transformed this year. While it's not necessarily a prideful moment, I was forced to let go and trust that God will see me through. This is something that I was never really challenged to do prior to the pandemic, but with all the uncertainty we're currently living in, it has forced me to trust in God's grace.

I don't think I would have made it through the pandemic without the community at St. Timothy's. The messages heard over this past year have resonated with me more than ever before and I find myself more regularly reflecting on how God has worked constantly in my life. It has truly been a blessing to have the family at St. Tim's throughout this past year.



T R U S T



HOW TO HELP

Peter Cho, *Adults*



The pandemic was a real challenge both physically and psychologically. The greatest struggle was being without social interaction and seeing myself and those around me experience anxiety and depression at varying degrees. It was tough not knowing how to help others as well as myself given the lockdown.

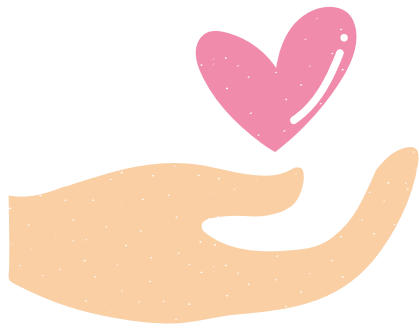


I would say it has helped me because the church community is a great resource for companionship and reflection.



Zoom meetings are a remaining part of a supportive community.





SEEKING SERENITY

Stephanie Cho, *Adults*

My view on how the pandemic has affected me and my life is very different now than it was at the start of it all. Last year around this time, I was asked to share my reflection of the pandemic as a young adult trying to make her way in this world. At that time, I was worried about how I would cope with the unplanned shifts in my daily life. Many of you are probably aware that I am very



much a planner by nature, and the uncertainty of what life was going to be like tomorrow had me on tilt.

What made things even more difficult was having to process the possibility that I would no longer be able to strive towards and achieve many of the goals I had set

out for 2020. I consistently questioned whether I would still be able to look at advancing my career, continue my health/fitness journey, get into some property, and find a boyfriend/life partner. I was feeling stuck and found I was making excuses to not take steps forward. However, as lockdowns and safety measures started to extend month after month, I couldn't just sit here and wallow... I felt the need to shift my mindset and do what I can to press on and continue life in the best way that I can. I needed to find a way to accept the things that I cannot change, but also understand that there are things that I CAN continue to change. For those wondering... I barely made the 2020 timeline, but I found a boyfriend! hahaha

Although I was not able to reach ALL of my goals, I was able to work

towards and build habits to put me in a good enough position to achieve those goals in the near future. It has given me the motivation to live a life where I am okay with "winging it" from time to time as opposed to planning every single thing out. Plus, I became a gomo for the first time to my new BFF JamJam and I could not be more in love!!!



While this sounds like a great year, there were still challenges and struggles I faced as a result of the pandemic such as: tolerating all hours of the day with family members, trying to conduct trainings and launch new data systems virtually, not seeing friends and family who play a huge role in a balanced lifestyle, etc. So even though there have been many pros during the pandemic so far, I recognize there are many cons as well.

My view on how the pandemic has affected me and my life is very different now than it was at the start of it all. Last year around this time, I was asked to share my reflection of the pandemic as a young adult trying to make her way in this world. At that time, I was worried about how I would cope with the unplanned shifts in my daily life. Many of you are probably aware that I am very much a planner by nature, and the uncertainty of what life was going to be like tomorrow had me on tilt.

If I am being completely honest, I'm not sure that my faith has changed much over the last year. I

find myself seeking and running away from God in phases, but I haven't been able to figure out what it is that leads me to either direction. I still sit here and question my faith in God, especially when I feel the most fragile and weak. I try to build my spiritual muscles through reflection, prayer and meditation to find my way back, but I feel like I'm still in this same spot I have been for many years.

Even though I am unsure where my faith stands, I continue to remind myself that I need God in my life. Why? Because He is who brought me into this world with a purpose. He is who will stand by me and know me in the good and the bad. He is who

will pick me up when I fall down. He is who will love me unconditionally no matter how far I stray away. He is my loving God.

For me, it was the consistent reach out and touch points from the Elders & Ministers that continued to remind me that our church community was still there, even though we weren't physically together. I experienced "zoom fatigue" early on in the pandemic since that quickly became my new normal for work, social interactions and church. As a result, I made the decision to step away from joining virtual worship for a few months.



Was that the best decision? Probably not, but that was the choice I made for myself in trying times.

Do I regret that decision? No, but over time I realized how important Sunday worship and our community is to my life. That time away gave me the opportunity to experience the "loss" of our community in my life and how important everyone in it is.



GOD, grant me the
serenity to accept the things I
cannot CHANGE;
courage to CHANGE the things I can;
and
wisdom to know the DIFFERENCE.

Reinhold Niebuhr

ST, TIMOTHY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Open Wide

*Open your mouth wide
and I will fill it.*

Psalm 81:10
