

ST Finnian's

NOVEMBER 2020



*The Importance of Remembrance
and
Not Forgetting*

Dear Friends

Many of us associate the month of November with remembering. We usually remember those who have died in the past year who were connected with the parish at a special service.

We remember on another Sunday those who made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives in times of war and strife. I know that such services and ceremonies will have to be observed in different ways this year. We have already requested that parishioners watch the Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance either on the live stream or through listening in over the phone to facilitate the families who lost loved ones during the year to attend.

If possible, I want to encourage parishioners this year to think of November not just as a month of remembering, but also a month when we don't forget. I know so many of our parishioners willingly got involved in our pastoral care buddy system as lockdown started back in March. People phoned each other regularly and many have commented on how helpful and encouraging they found those phone calls. Please don't forget those people you were phoning

as the months progress. As this magazine goes to print, news is breaking of new and more severe restrictions to curb the spread of coronavirus. It will affect schools and in particular the hospitality industry as we are reminded of what we need to do to stay safe.

At this point in time, the church buildings are permitted to remain open for worship and we are very grateful to our stewards, cleaning teams and technology teams for doing all they are doing to enable us to worship in a controlled and safe environment. Please don't forget however that many of our parishioners are still shielding or self-isolating and that is why your contact with others is so important. Phone calls and cards can make such a difference when people don't have their usual social outlets and many, many, as we are aware are keenly feeling the loss of a loved one. Others have loved ones in nursing homes or sheltered accommodation or in hospital and the visiting restrictions leave patients and families feeling very vulnerable and isolated while staff are doing their very best to offer the best care they can in a very difficult situation.

When I have a colleague we normally take much of November and December to try to visit every household in the parish and deliver a Christmas card invitation to some of our Advent and Christmas services and events. This year we have to do this quite differently as the current restrictions mean that I am not permitted to visit people's homes unless it is a situation of extremis involving a pastoral crisis, serious illness or bereavement.

What I hope to do in the light of this is to phone every household I have a number for over the next couple of months and if you feel comfortable, I am happy to pray for any situation that might be causing you concern. There are a lot of regulations and precautions around handling documents and papers so we hope to post out people's Christmas card in November along with their Freewill Offering envelopes to prevent lots of people having to handle them.

We are conscious that this is not the most comfortable juxtaposition of correspondence but we are trying to do things as safely and as carefully as we can to

protect our parish family. We hope that you understand the reason for this in these unprecedented times.

As we plan our Advent and Christmas programme, we realise that we cannot facilitate all of the things we normally do at this season but we hope that if people cannot come in person they will be able to connect in via the live stream or recordings. Certain services in the Christmas season may need to be pre-recorded to facilitate the deep cleaning required between services and to observe the current regulations we must follow.

The Bishop is using our church to record a talk for the Diocese later this week in connection with a proposed Gift Day on Advent Sunday 29th November.

The suggestion, as I understand it, is that parishes give 80% of the collection on that day to a local project to help their local community. 10% of the total will go to our link Diocese of Maridi in South Sudan where the COVID-19 situation has placed a huge strain on people and churches who live in acute poverty.

The remaining 10% will go to our diocesan Church Planting Fund where the Diocese is trying to

plant new churches in areas where there isn't a strong church presence and reach communities who have no church connection.

As I write this letter, I am conscious of parishioners who have lost employment or who have had their hours greatly reduced as the furlough scheme draws to a close.

Remembering through financial gifts is one way of helping but there are other ways too.

I am always struck by how generous our parishioners are in terms of their time and offering their talents.

Whether that is something like phoning those who are currently vulnerable or shielding or praying intentionally for others and for the church, these are vitally important things to do.

The other thing I need to say is that despite the best laid plans we are currently in a very uncertain and fluid situation and we may find we have to cancel services or events at very short notice. We will do our very best to keep people informed so please keep an eye on the parish website and Facebook page for the latest information and share it with other parishioners who

may not have internet access. While we are encouraged to remember this month, let's not forget those we need to stay in touch with. Let's not forget those too in other challenging situations in our prayers.

Let's pray for our Government, for scientific advisors and for those on the frontline in the Health Service, in retail and delivery and all who we know facing challenging times. I look forward to speaking to and praying with many over the coming months over the phone and if there's anything you want prayer for, please feel welcome to phone Robin our Prayer Warrior on 07513 947504 or myself on the number at the bottom of this letter.

In the meantime, stay safe and in the midst of all these challenges we remember God's promise never to leave us or forsake us and how He will be with us even to the end of the age.

(Matthew 28 verse 20)

With very best wishes to everyone.

Yours sincerely

**Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 02890 793822**

General Vestry 2020

The General Vestry meeting or the annual business meeting took place in the church on 13th October. The Rector presented a report and the Honorary Treasurer presented the accounts for adoption. At that meeting Jonathan Johnston was appointed Rector's Churchwarden for the incoming year and Jim Haughey was appointed Rector's Glebewarden. Amy Wall was elected as People's Churchwarden and Karen Gately was elected as People's Glebewarden. Norman Halliday was appointed Secretary of the Select Vestry and Mike Johnston was appointed as Honorary Treasurer. The following were also elected to the Select Vestry – Stephen Leckey, Neil Donaldson, Trevor Smyth, Michael Allen, Stephen Geoghegan, Ryan Moore, Brian Hayward, Norman Sleator, Brian Lavery and Ingrid Johnston.

Blue Christmas



For all sorts of reasons many find the Christmas season a difficult time of year. Bishop David has asked our church to host a special 'Blue Christmas' Service on **Sunday 6th December** which will be live streamed at 11am. It will acknowledge the many painful realities faced by those who have experienced bereavement, lost employment, relationship breakdown, financial hardship and other life-changing events making this season particularly difficult. It will be a quiet and meditative service. Please share an invitation with anyone who might find it helpful to either come in person or join us online on Sunday 6th December at 11am and 7pm.



FIELDS OF LIFE

COVID-19 RESPONSE EAST AFRICA

“Tonight, dinner just changed from expired bread to plates with rice, beans, tomatoes and soup that haven’t sat on someone else’s table or trash can.”

These are the words spoken by a lady called Zahara, on receiving food parcels from Fields of Life (FOL). She lives in the slums of Kampala and had resorted to scavenging in rubbish pits for scraps of bread to try to feed her family. The Governments in East Africa do not offer a general health service and there is a lack of equipment, skilled staff, beds etc. If there was a major outbreak of COVID-19, the hospitals would be unable to cope. Therefore, the Government has enforced stringent lockdown measures to help curb the spread of the disease. The banning of all travel, including scooters, has resulted in people being unable to work or sell their produce to earn a living. The inevitable consequence means hardship, lack of money and families going hungry. FOL is working with the local churches and NGOs to help distribute food to over 20,000 people in East Africa.

There are many stories of hardship in the area:

Helen, a seamstress, was trying to feed 17 people, which included her own family, her late sister’s family and a number of street children. Just before Covid, her house fell down, leaving her with no means of earning a living. When the pandemic arrived she was in dire need. FOL, in conjunction with '92 hands' org. are rebuilding the house and providing one meal per day for this extended family.

It is vital that the Covid message reaches all the communities across East Africa. This will not only help to save lives but will also counteract false information and myths in the region.

FOL has implemented a poster and radio campaign, relaying accurate and reliable information to over 250,000 people in their local language. In addition, a telephone call centre has been set up in Kampala to offer advice on Covid to various communities. Sanitary conditions are essential for fighting the spread of disease. FOL has supplied 49 hospitals and clinics with essential PPE equipment, including face masks, gloves and hand sanitisers. Semi-portable tapped water containers have also been supplied to assist with proper hand washing, as some of the rural hospitals and medical centres had only one washing facility. Soap and sanitisers have also been delivered to many communities across East Africa. FOL and the other agencies are a Godsend to the poor across the region. The measures taken by the authorities have kept the pandemic under reasonable control, however the resultant suffering and hunger for the poor has been devastating.

Richard Spratt has left FOL for pastures new after 11 years of dedicated and successful service. His replacement is Geoff Andrews, who is widely experienced in developing world charity work. **J.D.**

PRAYER WARRIOR

Do you have a concern or problem and would like
someone to pray for you?

If so, text Robin who will be willing to help.

This is completely confidential and no details will be passed
on to anyone else unless you want them to.

Mobile: 07513947504

20 Prayers to pray during the Coronavirus Pandemic

- 1.**For the sick and infected: God, heal and help. Sustain bodies and spirits. Contain the spread of infection.
- 2.**For our vulnerable populations: God, protect our elderly and those suffering from chronic disease. Provide for the poor, especially the uninsured.
- 3.**For the young and the strong: God, give them the necessary caution to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease. Inspire them to help.
- 4.**For our Governments: God, help our elected officials as they allocate the necessary resources for combatting this pandemic. Help them to provide more tests.
- 5.**For our scientific community, leading the charge to understand the disease and communicate its gravity: God, give them knowledge, wisdom, and a persuasive voice.
- 6.**For the media, committed to providing up-to-date information: God, help them to communicate with appropriate seriousness without causing panic.
- 7.**For consumers of media, looking to be well-informed: God, help us find the most helpful local information to equip us to be good neighbours. Keep us from anxiety and panic and enable us to implement the recommended strategies, even at a cost to ourselves.
- 8.**For those with mental health challenges who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless: God, provide them every necessary support.
- 9.**For the homeless, unable to practice the protocols of social distancing in the shelter system: Protect them from disease, and provide isolation shelters in every city.
- 10.**For international travellers stuck in foreign countries: God, help them return home safely and quickly.

11.For Christian missionaries throughout the world, especially in areas with high rates of infection: God, provide them with words of hope and equip them to love and serve those around them.

12.For workers in a variety of industries facing redundancy and financial hardship: God, keep them from panic and inspire your church to generously support them.

13.For families with young children at home for the foreseeable future: God, help mothers and fathers to partner together creatively for the care and flourishing of their children. For single mothers and fathers, grow their networks of support.

14.For parents who cannot stay home from work but must find care for their children: God, present them with creative solutions.

15.For those in need of regular therapies and treatments that must now be postponed: God, help them to stay patient and positive.

16.For business leaders making difficult decisions that affect the lives of their employees: God, give these women and men wisdom and help them to lead self-sacrificially.

17.For clergy and church leaders faced with the challenges of social distancing: God, help them to creatively imagine how to lead their congregations and love their cities well.

18.For college and university students, whose courses of study are changing, whose placements are cancelled, whose graduation is uncertain: God, show them that while life is uncertain, their trust is in you.

19.For Christians in every neighbourhood, community, and city: May your Holy Spirit inspire us to pray, to give, to love, to serve, and to proclaim the gospel, that the name of Jesus Christ might be glorified around the world.

20.For frontline health care workers, we thank you for their vocational call to serve us. We also pray:

God, keep them safe and healthy. Keep their families safe and healthy.

God, help them to be knowledgeable about the diagnosis and treatment of this disease, as well as the changing protocols.

God, help them to stay clear-minded in the midst of the surrounding panic.

God, deliver them from anxiety for their own loved ones (ageing parents, children, spouses, roommates).

God, give them compassion for every patient in their care.

God, provide for them financially, especially if they fall ill and are unable to work.

God, help Christians in health care to exhibit extraordinary peace, so that many would ask about the reason for their hope. Give them opportunities to proclaim the gospel.

God, we trust that you are good and do good. Teach us to be your faithful people in this time of global crisis. Help us to follow in the footsteps of our faithful shepherd, Jesus, who laid down his life for the sake of love. Glorify his name as you equip us with everything needed for doing your will.

Amen.



Prayers for the current situation

Ever present God, be with us in our isolation,
be close to us in our distancing,
be healing in our sickness,
be joy in our sadness, be light in our darkness,
be wisdom in our confusion,
be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar,
that when the doors reopen
we may with the zeal of Pentecost
inhabit our communities and speak of your goodness
to an emerging world.

For Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Father please hear us when we tell You of our concerns of
sending our children and educators back to school.
Know that we are striving to make all of the right decisions
and need Your love and power to help us overcome any
difficulties.

Please watch over everyone as times and routines are about
to change once again.

We know that we can do anything through You, so please
help us ensure health and semi-normalcy in the coming
months.

We give our hearts to You, now and forever.

Amen.

We pray for your love and compassion to abound
as we walk through this challenging season.

We ask for wisdom for those who bear the load
of making decisions with widespread consequences.

We pray for those who are suffering with sickness
and all who are caring for them.

May we approach each day in faith and peace,
trusting in the truth of your goodness towards us.

Amen.

CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY (CAP) CHRISTMAS HAMPERS



Christmas hampers are a key part of CAP's ministry to their clients. Due to restrictions this year they are unable to accept donations of physical goods to make up those hampers.

I know for many of you it is an important aspect of your Christmas, the season of generosity and goodwill. CAP doesn't want their clients to miss out on what for some is a lifeline to help them through Christmas. So for this year, CAP are asking those who would like to make a contribution to make a financial donation to enable them to purchase the items they would normally include in the hamper. They will be including the usual food staples but also some Christmas treats and gifts which living on a tight budget does not allow, in order to bless people. CAP hopes to be able to give their clients something towards heat and electricity also. They are unable to arrange a Christmas party and meal for them also so would like this gift to be something special.

A client from a previous year got in touch with the following message after receiving a hamper from CAP:

"Yesterday morning I returned home to the loveliest surprise you can imagine. Boxes filled with all manner of food and chocolates. Me and the children were so excited at this amazing, yet unexpected surprise. I can't quite get over the generosity of everyone who contributed to the substantial gift we received, and every item so well thought out and so very useful. We are so grateful for everyone's kindness. I don't like to feel as though we are in need of help, but sometimes life can get a little tough for everyone ...".

You can donate in 3 ways:

1)Logging on and giving through Kindlink: <https://www.kindlink.com/fundraising/willowfield-parish-community-association/cap-christmas-hampers>

2)Send a cheque made payable to “WPCA” to CAP Centre, Micah Centre, 149a My Lady’s Road, Belfast BT6 8FE. Please insert a note to say that it is for “CAP Christmas Hampers”.

3)Pay online or through your Bank to: WPCA
950114/80033383 Ref: CAP HAMPERS.

The closing date for receiving donations is
Sunday 6th December.

Thank you for your continued support.

Heather Harman



Hello everyone

I hope you are all keeping well and managing to cope at the moment as we enter the 2nd wave of the Coronavirus. Obviously it is still uncertain when Branch meetings can resume but we will let you know any key messages as soon as we can.

Normally at this time of year, members can order a Mothers' Union Diary and Calendar.

I have set out the costs etc for the items this year below.

Mothers' Union Diary	£4.25
Mothers' Union Year Planner	£3.55
Mothers' Union Calendar	£1.85

Helen McKnight, Branch Treasurer has kindly agreed to order the items for us so if anyone would like to order a MU diary/ MU Year Planner / MU Calendar please contact Helen at
Telephone No: 90798817 or Mobile No: 07907725571
by 14th November.

Helen would appreciate it if you could contact her between 5-8pm and she will deliver the items and collect the money .

As always please contact Clare, myself or any of the Committee members if you need any assistance or if anyone is ill.

The Mothers' Union Midday Prayers for November are detailed once again for your use.

Carol Bell ,Secretary

Mothers' Union—Midday Prayers—November 2020
Building hope and confidence.
Hope for gender justice.

Monday: Equal before God

God created human beings in his own image.
In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

Genesis 1:27, 31

Creator God,
thank you that we are all made in your image
and equally loved by you.

Open our eyes to behold your face
in those of our sisters and brothers.

As we draw near to Christ
in whom we are united through faith,
let us be ready to value each other
as beloved children of God.

We pray for all to follow Christ's example
of treating women with equality and respect.
We pray for the dawn of a better world
where justice and peace may flourish.

Amen.

Tuesday: Hope for change

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves;
ensure justice for those being crushed.

Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless,
and see that they get justice.

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NLT)

God our Creator,
we thank you for our shared calling
as your children, male and female together,
to care for all of creation.

Forgive us when we fail to notice or
to question that which is less than good:
when we condone or perpetuate violence of any kind.

Fill us with your Spirit of wisdom
and help us to see the world
through your eyes of compassion and justice.

Give us courage to challenge and to change,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Liberator.

Amen.



Wednesday: Hope of transformation

God created both male and female and blessed them,
the whole human race.

Genesis 5:2 (The Message)

Lord,

**we pray for transformation of our societies
which often find it easier
to judge the victims of violence
than to solve the problems of injustice.**

We pray for a transformation in the violent way
many men act towards and think about women.

We pray for right and just relations between women and men
that together we may transform and overcome violence in all its forms
and learn to celebrate our diversity and interdependence.

**We look forward to the age of peace, when violence is banished,
both women and men are able to love and to be loved,
and the work and wealth of our world is justly shared.**

Amen.

Thursday: Actions of hope

He has shown you what is good.

And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

**Lord of justice and mercy,
draw us close to those who hurt.
Let us reach out our hands in your name
to share the sorrow and lessen the pain.**

Lengthen our strides to march for good.

Clothe our feet with your living Word
to trample the works of injustice.

Knit us together as the body of Christ
that we may act with one accord
for the kingdom of God to prevail.

**Lord of justice and mercy
fill us with new resolve
to pursue actions of hope
in the name of Christ.**

Amen.



Friday: United in hope

Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. *Luke 18:7-8*

**Loving Lord,
we draw near in faith;
united in hope and purpose.**

We pray for the work of our members worldwide to combat gender injustice; for their highlighting of the issue, their petitioning of governments and their work with victims and survivors.

As a global family we embrace our mission to speak out for the vulnerable and voiceless.

Help us play our part in creating a just and equal society.

**Loving Lord,
in hope and unity
we offer up these prayers,
as we campaign for gender justice
across the world.**

Amen.

Saturday: Hope for the future

The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy.

I have come in order that you might have life — life in all its fullness.

John 10:10

**Lord of life,
thank you that many women and girls
are free from injustice and violence.**

**Thank you for your healing power
which brings hope for the future.**

Heavenly Father, continue to move amongst the earth to change attitudes that promote, accept and perpetuate all forms of gender injustice.

May fear be vanquished and freedom reign, that all may lead positive lives in safety and peace.

**We pray for all to follow your example
of treating women with equality and respect.**

**We pray for the dawn of a better world
where justice and peace may flourish.**

Amen.



Electronic Donations

For those of you who have thought about setting up a Standing Order or Electronic Transfer and just haven't got around to it, you will find below the details that you need when setting one up.

The parish bank details are:-

Sort code **95-01-34**

Account number **11089757**

Account name **St Finnians Parish Church** (*please use exactly as printed as this will match the account name held by the bank.*)

Reference Please include a Reference with your payment which should be the six digit number beginning 000 at the bottom right of the label on your envelope box and your surname e.g. **000999 SMITH. This is NOT your envelope number.**

If you can't find it , contact the church office and someone will be in touch.

Mike Johnston (Hon. Treasurer)



Update on our annual Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal

Hello everyone

As previously advised, I have been told that there has been a request from many countries to give boxes for the children through the Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal. I am hoping that St. Finnian's will be able to support this need as part of the Belfast appeal.

The question is how?

The Church itself will not be able to facilitate the donation of boxes, so we need to look at a different option. You can therefore complete an online box via the email below. You can choose to virtually fill a box yourself (where you can choose what kind of items go in the box), or you can request to send a pre-packed box. Just click the option you prefer.

<https://shoeboxonline.samaritans-purse.org.uk>

Pack your shoe box Send a pre-packed shoe box

I know this is a very different way of donating boxes this year but I hope you will feel able to get involved.

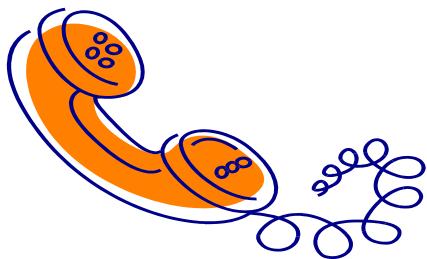
Thank you.

Jill McPeak

CONTACT DETAILS

Rector:

Telephone 028 90793822



Magazine

Please send articles for inclusion in the **December** magazine to office.cregagh@down.anglican.org or telephone the Parish Office 90792793 by NOON on **Tuesday 10th November**.

Don't forget to check out the church website:

www.stfinnians.org

Church Office Hours

Tuesday 9.00 am – 2.00 pm

Wednesday 9.00 am – 2.00 pm

TELEPHONE 028 90792793
office.cregagh@down.anglican.org



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