

ST Finnian's

FEBRUARY 2021



Our online church *for all* is at



[Facebook.com/StFinnians](https://www.facebook.com/StFinnians)

www.stfinnians.org



028 9344 7225 (Dial-in service)

Dear Friends

I was sent a post on my Facebook feed a couple of days ago that made me smile and think at the same time.

It featured a photo of former United States President, Jimmy Carter. He was using a hand drill working on some timber frames. He was dressed in working clothes with a baseball hat, his jeans, a padded shirt and jacket. Beneath the baseball hat you could see he was sporting a black eye and a plaster covered a cut above his eye.

The post read as follows:

This is Jimmy.

Jimmy is 95 years old.

Jimmy had brain cancer in 2015.

Jimmy broke a hip in May 2019.

Jimmy fell at home on Sunday requiring 19 stitches.

Jimmy showed up on Monday to help build houses for Habitat for Humanity.

Jimmy is a bad ass!

Without wishing to cause offence with the language in the post, it pointed out some of the important qualities of character that are part of President Carter's approach to life.

Whatever we might think of his policies or his presidency it's interesting to see that in

retirement, he has dedicated his time to working with Habitat for Humanity, building houses and accommodation for families on low incomes who otherwise would not be able to afford it. Jimmy Carter is a man whose Christian faith has always informed his approach to life and indeed he left the denomination of his upbringing because of their position on not allowing women into leadership positions in the church. He believed it was a violation of human rights and so despite being a member for over 85 years, he made the decision to sever his ties with the denomination about 5 years ago.

As we journey into another lockdown and our church building is closed once more for public worship, there are a couple of things I think President Carter can show us that are important. The first is a willingness to serve. At the age of 95 he might well expect to take things a bit easier but instead as long as he has the skills and the energy he wants to dedicate his life to helping those less fortunate than himself.

He could pursue more lucrative and high profile positions. There would be possibilities, one might imagine, in serving on the board of corporations or delivering lectures or writing books but he has chosen to live in relative anonymity helping out on these housing projects with Habitat for Humanity as a volunteer. The second is the importance of character and principle. It can't have been an easy decision to leave the denomination he had been part of all his life but when they took decisions he believed to be contrary to the way of Jesus, he was prepared to sever his connection. I love the character of someone who having overcome brain cancer and a broken hip in old age was not prepared to let a fall and stitches prevent him from showing up to do more work on a Monday morning when undoubtedly his body must have been sore and stiff but he could see the value of the work and how it might make a difference. Last week I reflected on the words in my own sermon, in particular some of the ideas of that renowned church reformer Martin Luther.

He spoke of the priesthood of all believers and argued that our baptism was essentially the occasion of our ordination. It was the point when we were set apart to do God's work in the world. What that meant in practice for Luther, was doing whatever we normally do ,with one difference. We no longer do it for ourselves or our employer but we do it for God. He described our hands as being God's hands whether those hands are operating a computer, making a meal, changing a nappy or tending the land. Whether we are running a company or trying to home school our family or keep people safe during a global pandemic. He spoke about people who pray and intercede for others. I think about these things in a time of a global pandemic. How can I lead the church more effectively during a time of lockdown? Is it about setting people free to see what they can do for God? Is it about inviting more people who may now have more time through the circumstances we are in to pray for others, to care for others through phone calls or cards?

Is it about providing tools and training to build up confidence to do whatever it is you do each day in God's name and for God's glory?

We have so many amazing volunteers in our church who have been doing incredible work over this past year but it takes the whole congregation to catch the vision and widen the impact of Christ's love on the world around us.

If I were spared to the age of 95 wouldn't it be something to have something of the character of Jimmy Carter, to be willing to use whatever skills I might have in the service of others?. Wouldn't it be something to have the courage of my convictions and speak up and act wherever I believe there to be injustice? Wouldn't it be powerful to simply keep showing up and doing the little I could for God and for His glory? This month sees the beginning of the season of Lent and while we are not sure how our Lenten services will look just yet, we do have some important plans. In the first instance, in the light of so many people in our community being unwell with COVID-19 and

other illnesses, would you be willing to pray confidentially for people who need our prayers at the present time? Would you be willing to pray for public figures like our Government and our scientific and medical advisers? Would you be willing to commit time to praying for our NHS workers, retail workers and delivery drivers who are providing essential services alongside those working in education, those trying to police the present lockdown and the many hidden unknown people who are continuing to shield and isolate and live in fear in the current pandemic? Could you commit to praying for our economy, for those who are furloughed or who have lost employment and are suffering financially? Can you pray and be part of a team from this place who might bless the local community through our prayers even if that very act is hidden from everyone else? If there are volunteers who get in touch I will endeavour to provide some simple principles and videos to help us do this important work together as we journey forward in faith together.

I also want to reassure everyone that we will endeavour to continue to provide services online and a dial-in service by phoning 028 93447225 .We will continue to write blogs and publish our magazine with resources to encourage and help you in these difficult days. Thank you for all your prayers and encouragement. We take heart from Jimmy Carter today and his simple faith-filled approach as we look forward in the coming months to the rolling out of the vaccine.

With very best wishes to everyone.

Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 028 90793822



WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THE ST. FINNIAN'S PRAYER TEAM?

Praying for our parishioners, community and country is more important than ever in these challenging times. If you would like to be part of the St. Finnian's prayer team, please contact our Rector, Jono on 028 90793822 and he will provide guidance.

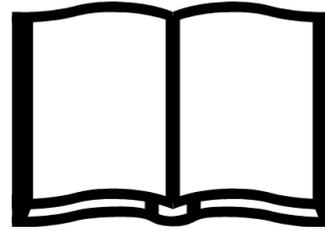
**Your prayers can help to
make a difference!**

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

From the Registers

Christian Burial:



9th January 2021

Mary (Dolores) Whittaker

Services for February



Due to the Government restrictions, worship in church is not currently taking place. **There is due to be a review of this situation on 5th March.** Please keep an eye on the church website and Facebook page for updates. Alternatively, you can ring the church office if you require any information.

The office is open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9.00 am-2.00 pm. The office telephone number is 028 90792793.

In the meantime, online church services are available at www.stfinnians.org, [Facebook.com/StFinnians](https://www.facebook.com/StFinnians) or the dial-in service can be reached on 028 93447225.

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

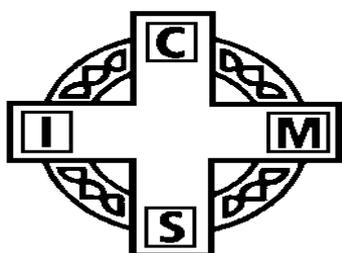
REGISTER OF VESTRY MEMBERS

Please note that the annual review of the Register of Vestry Members will be carried out at the meeting of the Select Vestry to be held on **Tuesday 16th February 2021**.

Any person wishing to be registered as a resident or as an accustomed member must complete a Form of Declaration. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions which will curtail church worship until at least 6th February, the forms will be available on the Parish Website, Facebook and from the Secretary to the Select Vestry whose e-mail address is

ncg.halliday@btinternet.com

Completed forms must be returned to the Secretary to the Select Vestry, preferably by e-mail, before the date of the meeting – 16th February.



Church of Ireland Men's Society

The last time the Men's Society met was in February of last year and here we are a year later. We continue to remember, with regret, the passing of those members who have left us in the intervening months, when we have not been able to attend funerals. The last year has been a time of upheaval and we wish all our members and their families well in 2021 as we strive to reach a form of normality. We hope to meet again at some stage this year but for now we can only wait to see how things develop as the well-being of our members is paramount. We will of course keep you informed as the situation unfolds. In the meantime, please keep safe and look forward to better days ahead.

Ralph McMurray
Hon. Secretary

Prayers to pray during lockdown

Merciful God, hear our prayers for a world that continues to grapple with a relentless virus, and our gratitude for the light beginning to emerge at the end of a long and deadly tunnel. As vaccines are at last becoming available for COVID-19 and as people begin to be inoculated around the globe, we give thanks for all whose tireless labours have brought us to this day: technicians, scientists, medical personnel, biotech companies and Government agencies that have worked together to find a cure that will restore our communities to wholeness and health.

Amen.

Lord, we pray that the reach of the COVID-19 vaccines will encompass the world, especially those places where medical resources have far too often been inadequate to the need — places where under-resourced medical systems are overwhelmed by the essential work of caring for those who have been infected. We continue to pray for healthcare workers around the globe who are worn down and exhausted after months of high-risk essential work on the frontlines of this pandemic. Grant them strength, endurance, wisdom and courage for the living of these days.

Amen.

Dear Lord we pray for all who are desperately ill, for those who grieve the loss of loved ones and for those whose physical, mental and economic well-being have been most severely impacted by the havoc wrought by the pandemic. Grant wisdom to all entrusted with civic leadership as they discern and negotiate just ways in which to aid those most afflicted. We pray that our communities may be restored and revitalised. Let us live in the Spirit of Christ for one another and for our world.

Amen.

Prayers for the education system

Lord, we know you hold the future and walk with us even now on this unpredictable path of the pandemic.

As we look to another change in the new school year, we worry about the ongoing impact of COVID-19. It seems to be a time of no right answers, no clear good choices and no comprehensive way for parents, educators and administrators to meet the pressing needs of students, teachers, staff and families. We do not want children to fall further behind in their learning. We do not want to endanger the health of any in our community. Already stretched resources are pushed to the limit as we attempt to expand the ways education is delivered and seek to enact needed safety precautions.

We look to you, Lord, to take, bless and multiply our efforts to educate and nurture your children.

As we make difficult decisions in an unprecedented time, grant us an unshakeable commitment to one another, especially to the most vulnerable among us.

Amen.

Dear Lord, we thank you that you are with us in every situation. We ask you will be with our school children and students during this time of uncertainty. We ask you to be with the teachers, as they prepare their lessons for children and try to devise new ways of teaching through technology. We ask that children will have peace as they attend their lessons in a virtual learning environment and that they can still have fun as they learn. We ask for your healing power to be with the members of staff, children and their families who are ill, that they may make a speedy recovery. We ask that you will give wisdom to our headteachers and senior leaders as they make decisions for their schools and seek to find creative ways of supporting the school during this time.

Amen.



FIELDS OF LIFE

Rev. Trevor Stevenson, the founder of Fields of Life has written a book entitled '**FROM KILLING FIELDS to FIELDS OF LIFE**'. The book details his experiences as a curate in Magheralin Parish. Whilst on a pastoral visit to Uganda, he felt compelled by God to do something about the poverty and suffering he found there. It covers the 3 years Trevor and his wife Ruth spent in Uganda and the subsequent development and expansion of FOL in East Africa. It is a frank and sincere story of hardship and despair, success and joy, written frankly and honestly.

The cost of the book is £10.00. All proceeds go to Fields of Life funds. Anyone interested in purchasing the book can contact me with their details and I will deliver. **John Downey**
Tel. 028 90448757, Mob. 07817465234.

Email: jwdowney@btinternet.com.



A true story of hope from Fields of Life in Northern Uganda.

There is a lady called Atek, a grandmother living near Gulu. One morning she awoke to discover that her 12 year old son Hillary had been abducted as a child soldier by 'The Lord's Resistance Army' (the terrorist leader Joseph Kony). Only two years later, her husband was killed, leaving her alone and in extreme poverty. Atek spent many years hoping and crying out to God that she one day would see her son again. 10 years later, a woman arrived at her door with a 5 year old child. This woman told her that she had also been abducted as a child soldier, and that during her many years living in the camp she married Atek's son, Hillary. To her astonishment, Atek was not only being introduced to her daughter-in-law, but also her grandson Denis. Tragically, Atek was told that her son had been killed in a fight, freeing his wife to leave. Atek held Denis in her arms, weeping at the loss of her son, but also praising God that she had been granted the opportunity to embrace her grandson. At that moment, Atek knew that her newfound purpose was to look after her grandchild, and bring him up to have a future that her own son never had. Atek took Denis to Abura Primary school, where he is one of the Fields of Life's sponsored children. He wants to be a teacher and dreams of being able to look after his grandmother one day.

Atek's story is one that exemplifies true hope. Atek never stopped hoping. Thanks to her resilience and strength, Denis has hope for his future.



Divine Healing Ministries — Everyday Prayers for this Time

Trusting God

O God our refuge and strength as we face the uncertainty and anxiety of the next few months give us the faith to believe that as we turn to you in prayer you will see us through the trials and tribulations that lie ahead. Help us to keep our eyes fixed on you so that your power and your peace may be released in our lives, for the protection and blessing of your people and to your honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for effective treatment and vaccines for COVID-19. We thank you that vaccines have been found and that vaccination programmes are being rolled out. Strengthen all in the frontline with your Spirit that through their work many will be restored to health or prevented from becoming ill; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

God's Creation and the Environment

Heavenly father, teach us to recognise the beauty, wonder and diversity of your creation and to fulfil our responsibilities towards maintaining it. Teach us to protect the environment, to be mindful of your creation, and above all mindful of you the Great Creator. In Jesus' name we pray through whom all was made.

Amen.

Hello everyone

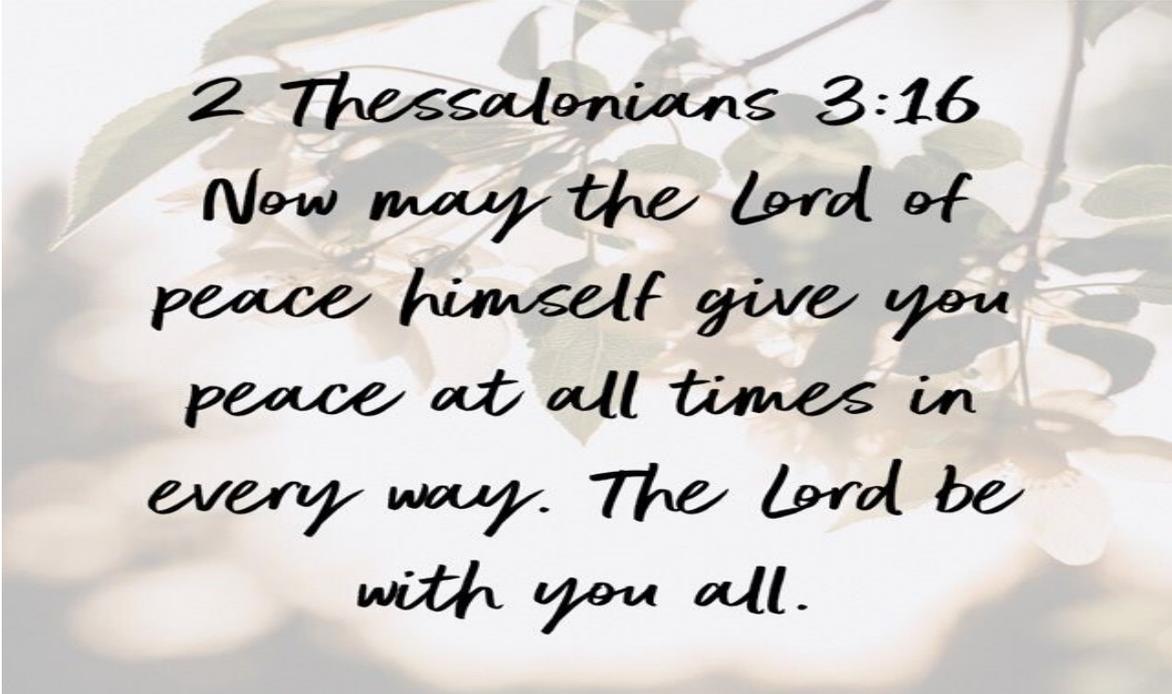
Well we are now into February 2021 and normally we would be heading out to our annual dinner .Unfortunately that is not the case for this year but do feel free to have a special meal and a glass of something on Thursday 4th February just to remember us all.

By now you will all have received a letter from Clare Stewart, Branch Leader which sets out the details of this year's subscriptions and the arrangements for payment. Clare also explained the arrangements for Overseas Donations. If you have any questions or concerns please do contact Clare, Helen or myself .

It is with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Dolores Whittaker and I would ask that you pray for her family and friends at this time.

Finally please know that we think and pray for you all each day and we hope that we will all be able to meet again later in 2021. The Midday Prayers are detailed for your daily devotions.

Carol Bell



*2 Thessalonians 3:16
Now may the Lord of
peace himself give you
peace at all times in
every way. The Lord be
with you all.*

Mothers' Union—Midday Prayers—February 2021
Hope and confidence in God's Word

Monday: Jesus the living word

**In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

John 1:1, 14

Sovereign Lord,
your hand has touched
the dry bones of our faith.
Your Word has breathed
new life where there was death.
Your spirit raised
us up from where we lay.
Your love has brought
us home and to your Cross.
And by your grace
we stand forgiven, free.

Hallelujah!

**We thank you, God, for Jesus, the living Word.
May your Word forever dwell among us,
imparting hope and confidence
in your enduring grace and truth.
Amen.**

Tuesday: Inspiration of God's Word

**Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.**

Psalms 119:105

God, we praise and thank you for your saving Word
reaching out to us through the sacred scriptures.
We thank you, too, for the brothers and sisters
with whom we share your Word
and discover together the abundance of your love.
We pray for the light of your Holy Spirit,
so that your word may lead and direct us
into the unity you will for the sake of the world.

**Give us grace, O Lord,
not only to hear your Word with our ears,
but also to receive it into our hearts
and to show it forth in our lives;
for the glory of your great name.
Amen.**

Wednesday: Power of God's Word

The word of God is alive and active.

**Sharper than any double-edged sword,
it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit,
joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts
and attitudes of the heart.**

Hebrews 4:12

Your Word is the light we see, a guide for our footsteps
to where you are found.

Your Word is the strength we find
when darkness threatens to overwhelm.

Your Word is the power we need to become servants
of a Heavenly King.

Your Word is the reason we live in the sure knowledge
you are everything.

**We thank God for the power of his Word,
which is living and active in our lives;
which fills us with his strength and light,
and directs our steps through every circumstance of life.
Amen.**

Thursday: Security in God's Word

As for God, his way is perfect:

**the Lord's word is flawless;
he shields all who take refuge in him.**

Psalms 18:30

How perfect is our God!

**At the beginning of the day
we receive your Word with joy and praise.**

Whatever our day holds,
whether good times or hard,
we are upheld by the Word of God,
and his limitless provision.

What a refuge is our God!

**At the heart of the day
we trust in your Word for security and strength.**

Whatever our life holds,
if certainties prove false,
we are upheld by the Word of God
and his infinite steadfastness.

How faithful is our God!

**At the end of the day
we treasure your Word
with gratitude and praise.**

Amen.

Friday: God's eternal Word

**The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God stands forever.**

**Your word, O Lord, is eternal;
it stands firm in the heavens.**

Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 119:89

From the very beginning was
Your Word which spoke this world into being,
Your Word which thunders from the skies,
Your Word which flows like mountain streams,
Your Word which whispers in morning breeze,
Your Word revealed through kings and prophets,
Your Word revealed through Angels' praise,
Your Word revealed in humble service,
Your Word revealed through a tiny child,
Your Word alive from the beginning of all things and to eternity.

**May we be forever
sustained by the written Word,
inspired by the spoken Word,
and bear witness to the Living Word,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Saturday: Hope and confidence in God's Word

**God's words are more precious than gold,
than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.**

Psalm 19:10

Living Word, Author of Life,
we praise you for your Word in all its forms.
As we hear and read your Word,
give us enquiring minds and open hearts;
ready to respond to its challenge
and to embrace its vision.

Loving Father, send your Holy Spirit
to bring life to your Word.

Touch our minds and souls
with the wonders in your message.

Thrill our hearts by fresh insight
in new and familiar scriptures.

**Lord, we praise you for your Word.
May it forever unite us together
as we share in the wonder
of your enduring grace and truth.
Amen.**



FEBRUARY—SIGNS OF HOPE

The Snowdrop

Just as its name suggests, the Snowdrop (meaning ‘milk flower of the snow’) may not wait for the snow to fully melt before emerging from the ground. It is due to their traditional flowering time around February 2nd that the first spring flowers are also known as ‘Fair Maids of February’ or ‘Candlemas Bells’, from the name of the Christian holiday celebrated on that date. The Candlemas Holy Day commemorates three Holy occasions in one: the presentation of the child Jesus; Jesus’ first entry into the Temple; and the Virgin Mary’s purification. The Candlemas Holy Day is based upon the account of the presentation of Jesus in **Luke 2:22-40**. According to the Christian belief, the snowdrops flower at that time to symbolise hope and Jesus as the “light of the world.” Snowdrops are the first flowers of the Spring and a symbol of hope that warm times will enter our lives again.

The Snowflake Fairy

*Robed in white comes Snowflake Fairy,
Braving wintry winds and ice,
Pearly “Maid of February”,
Whom the glistening frosts entice.*

*Gladly welcome Snowflake Fairy,
On your terrace give her room.
She alone in February
Braves the cold to shed her bloom.*

by Elizabeth Gordon.



CHRISTIANS AGAINST POVERTY (CAP) **CHRISTMAS HAMPERS—THANK YOU**

Hi Folks

I just wanted to send you a message to thank you most sincerely for the money your church donated to enable us to provide a Christmas hamper for the clients this year. Over £3000 was donated which enabled us to provide a good quality hamper, some Christmas treats, toys for the children and fuel/electricity top-ups. There is enough left to provide an additional hamper and more help with their energy costs during these cold winter months. We normally have a 'fun & food' evening for them in January but unfortunately this year, that will not be possible.

"And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8

God has indeed blessed abundantly.

It was a privilege for me to be able to spend some time with each client as I delivered the hampers and caught up with them. A number of the clients are finishing with us this year so for them it will be the last CAP Christmas hamper. They wanted me to pass on their deep gratitude for your generosity at this difficult time and throughout the years they have been working with CAP. The transformation in them is remarkable so thank you for being a part of that journey for them out of debt. Everything we do for them is a reflection of our gratitude to God for what He has done for us. That love is demonstrated in these hampers. I would like to thank you all and may you continue to be blessed in 2021 to enable you to continue to be a blessing to others.

James Myles

Christians Against Poverty



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.**

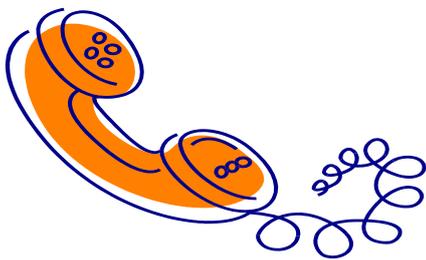
If you can't find it, please contact the church office and someone will be in touch.

Mike Johnston (Hon. Treasurer)

CONTACT DETAILS

Rector:

Telephone 028 90793822



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

Magazine

Please send articles for inclusion in the **March** magazine to **office.cregagh@down.anglican.org** or telephone the Parish Office 90792793 by NOON on **Tuesday 9th February.**

Don't forget to check out the church website:

www.stfinnians.org



Find us on Facebook!
[Facebook.com/StFinnians](https://www.facebook.com/StFinnians)

Registered with
The Charity Commission for
Northern Ireland NIC101977