

ST Finnian's

MARCH 2021



*The importance of taking
a spiritual journey
during Lent.*

Dear Friends

I wonder if you have ever been struck by how music can transport you to other places and times in your life? Sometimes we hear a song on the radio or a hymn in church and it takes us back perhaps to our school days or holidays or memories of what we were doing when that song was being played on the radio all the time. I always think of the season of Lent, which we are entering as this magazine goes to print, as a journey. It's a journey that Christians are invited to take as they accompany Jesus to Jerusalem and eventually to the Cross. If we decide to try to live with Jesus at the centre of our lives, it involves taking Him into the good parts as well as some of the more challenging and difficult parts. Sometimes we are walking along on that journey and we feel fulfilled and content but at other times we seem to be assailed by doubts and questions. We feel angry and confused as unexpected circumstances seem to derail us without warning. We wonder why something has happened to us— an illness, a bereavement, a crushing disappointment.

We find it hard to get the courage to put our shoes on again and go outside the door. During my twenties I had the opportunity to visit the monastic community in Taizé in France three or four times. It's an ecumenical community of Brothers who work to promote peace and reconciliation and also to assist young people in their spiritual search. Most people come from all around the world to spend a week and attend the worship and Bible studies with the Brothers, to reflect together in small groups and to spend time getting to know each other and have fun together. People live together in community very simply, queueing up for simple nutritious meals, assisting with chores, sleeping in tents or dormitories. There is also the option to spend a week in silence where you live in a house a little bit removed from all the other pilgrims. You get daily teaching from one of the Brothers and attend worship in the vast church of reconciliation along with all the other pilgrims before retiring in silence.

On one of my visits, where I spent a week in silence, before making quite a big decision, I took the opportunity to meet with one of the Brothers for spiritual direction. He met with me every day and gave me questions to think about and reflect upon. One evening he gave me a map and traced out a few walking routes of varying lengths. He asked me to take a walk with Jesus the next day and tell him the deepest concerns on my heart and listen carefully, as I took my walk, to what he might be wanting to share with me. Perhaps I expected big booming voices or a very definite sense of what I ought to be doing but neither of these things happened. What I did become aware of as I walked through the Burgundy countryside was the beauty of God's creation. I took time to smell wild garlic and honeysuckle after a rain shower. I felt the warm sun break through onto my face and received a peace I wasn't expecting as I poured out my concerns to the Lord on my walk. There wasn't a strong sense that I should make this

or that choice but rather the sense was, whichever choice I made, I would not be alone. God seemed to promise to walk with me whichever path I chose and he assured me of His love and concern for me. It was a special walk and I remember writing about it in my journal at the time and sharing some of the insights I received with the Brother later that evening. I want to encourage you to take this spiritual walk with Jesus through the season of Lent towards the Cross. Everyone is suffering at the present time to a greater or lesser extent because of the pandemic. Many of the liberties we normally take for granted are taken from us. We can't walk or travel as freely as we would wish to. We can't visit friends or family under the current restrictions and we can't, at the time of writing, even attend our accustomed places of worship. Does this mean that God has disappeared or is unable to break through into our lives? I don't believe so, but our job is to keep walking with him. It's to be faithful and honest and admit those times we are struggling.

It's about making ourselves available to hear from him whether through daily Bible readings or times of prayer. It's about availing of those opportunities available to us through the telephone services or online services either from our own parish church or from somewhere we have never been before. How much space can you allow God in this season to say important things to you or to teach you things you need to learn and receive? Each Thursday during Lent there will be an online service which lasts about 30-40 minutes. The first three are designed to be practical tips about looking after our mental, physical and spiritual health during lockdown. These will be shared by parishioners who have much wisdom and experience in their different fields. The next few services I hope will be stories of faith to show different people's experience of God becoming real in their lives. During Holy Week each night at 7.30pm our devotional journey will be led by my neighbour and friend Rev. Adrian Green, the Rector of Mount Merrion who

has very kindly agreed to fulfil a commitment he made to come and share with us last year when the church was closed. If we are not at that stage allowed to gather in person, Adrian will record his series of talks for us. He is a very gifted communicator and I look forward immensely to what he hopes to share with us. In the uncertainty of these times when so much is up in the air, do please endeavour to avail of this opportunity to journey with Jesus through this Holy Season and be blessed by what you discover and encounter of Him.

With very best wishes.

Yours sincerely
Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 02890 793822





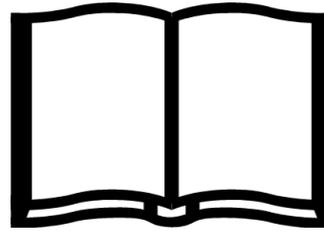
LENT, HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Each Thursday during Lent at 7.30pm there will be a short service online and from Monday to Friday of Holy Week there will be services each night at 7.30pm. The first Lenten Service will be on 18th February. **The Assembly is scheduled to review their decision about in-church worship on 6th March so the best suggestion to make is to keep your eye on the parish website and Facebook page.** We are making preparations to have all our services online and available via the telephone service but if we are allowed to gather in person and believe it to be safe to do so, we will have that possibility before us.

Easter Vestry 2021

The annual business meeting of the church, the Easter General Vestry is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 23rd March at 7.30pm in the church. At this meeting the accounts are presented to the parish and the Rector makes a report about the previous year's activities. A new Select Vestry is elected and people are appointed to hold various offices. Those who are over the age of 18 and registered as members of the parish are entitled to vote at this meeting and like most things at the present time, we will need to keep an eye on the website and announcements to ascertain if we can go ahead on the planned date in light of the current restrictions.

**From the Registers
Christian Burial 2021:**



29th January **Tommy Hutchinson**
11th February **Frank Savage**

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



Divine Healing Ministries — Everyday Prayers for this Time

For the vulnerable

God of mercy, whose son Jesus Christ lived among the poor, oppressed and marginalised; hear our prayer for those who are fearful, vulnerable and isolated; be their strong defence in times of need, and grant us compassion and courage to minister Christ to them, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Amen.

For our Church leaders

Heavenly Father, please give wisdom and guidance to our church leaders, strengthen them to organise care for their congregations, facilitate in-church and online worship and to lead their flock as the church reaches out to its local community.

Amen.

Private sector business

Heavenly father, we give you thanks for the short-term support from Government aimed at helping businesses survive the ongoing storms of COVID-19. We hope and pray that this necessary support will continue to be available. We also pray for satisfactory outworkings on the new UK-EU trade deal and the NI Protocol. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

For young people

Lord of all, hear our prayers for the young people of our land; enthusiastic young people with so many gifts and fresh ideas to offer. Lord, they live with all kinds of pressures, demands and temptations. Bless them and protect them from evil.

In your Name we pray.

Amen.

Prayer resources for the pandemic

To our brothers and sisters who have contracted and are suffering due to Coronavirus disease, we pray that God's healing hand may rest upon you.

To medical doctors, nurses and the supporting staff who are in the frontline of the fight against COVID-19, may the Lord sustain you and inspire you to render your life-saving services with due care, love and compassion. To all those who have lost their loved ones due to the Coronavirus outbreak, we convey our deepest sympathies. We pray that God may grant all bereaved families his consolation and strengthen their faith and hope in Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord.

Amen.

Dear Lord, at this time of pandemic,
Let us foster respect and solidarity with others, especially those who are weak or poor.

Let us remain calm and ignore unsubstantiated rumours.

Let us take advantage of living together as a family.

Let us attend to moments of prayer.

Let us cultivate responsibility, patience and hope.

Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, light of the world, thank you for the hope you have given us.

Help us to give our worries to you and, above all, to trust in your unfailing love.

For you have promised us "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."

Almighty God, our protector, let us trust in you to carry us through this time of uncertainty.

Jesus, hear our cries as we mourn those who've left us.

Whatever tomorrow may bring, we will praise your name.

Amen.

Loving God, at this time of crisis
when so many are suffering,
we pray for our nation and our world.
Give our leaders wisdom,
our Health Service strength, our people hope.
Lead us through these parched and difficult days
to the fresh springs of joy and comfort
that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Loving Father God,
be with us in our distress;
be with our families, friends, and neighbours,
our country and our world.
Give health to the sick, hope to the fearful,
and comfort to mourners.
Give wisdom to our frontline and key workers,
insight to our Government, and patience to us all.
Overcome disease with the power of your new life,
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ,
in these dark and difficult days, we turn our hearts to you.
In ages past, you have delivered our nation from disaster.
Do it again, we pray.
Give wisdom beyond human wisdom to our leaders,
Give strength beyond human strength to the NHS and all our
frontline workers.
Give comfort beyond human comfort to the elderly and all
who grieve.
Lord Jesus Christ, in these dark and difficult days,
turn your face towards us, have mercy upon us,
and heal our land, we pray.

Amen.

L'Arche Village

L'Arche is a network of communities where people with and without learning disabilities share life together. Since 2001 our Belfast community has been empowering adults with learning disabilities to live full and meaningful lives. We have 4 houses on the Ormeau Road which are home to 14 core members, where 24-hour domiciliary care and housing support services are provided. Additionally, we offer opportunities for friendship, participation and belonging through our day projects. Over the years we ran our day projects in a variety of locations in the Belfast area offering kitchen, garden and art activities. These were extremely well attended and enjoyed by participants from all corners of our city. In early 2020 we acquired new premises at 36A Manse Road right beside Lagan College in an effort to expand, centralise and streamline all of our projects at one location. The premises consisted of two huge polytunnels and two portacabins as well as a great deal of potential. We knew that this was the location where we could realise our vision of having somewhere to welcome not just adults with learning difficulties but all types of community groups who might be interested in using the facilities. We had planned to fundraise and develop the site over time whilst continuing our popular projects around the city, however lockdown came so suddenly and everything came to a halt. This affected our participants in so many ways leaving them feeling isolated, disrupting their routines and having a very negative effect on their mental health. Little did we know that our new site would become live so quickly given our outer city locations were unable to reopen safely after restrictions had been lifted. In September 2020, the new site was opened and we named it 'L'Arche Village'. It has become a lifeline to many of our participants who were able to attend sessions safely when lockdown was relaxed.

We used the polytunnels and the outdoor space for our established activities such as gardening, art and music. Then with the help of some facilitators we added so many new and exciting activities such as flamenco dance, yoga, tai chi, community circus, aerobics as well as many games such as pool, table football, badminton, boules and quoits. In the Autumn we added four lovely wooden cabins to serve as space for art, music and woodwork so that we could continue to offer indoor sessions over the winter months. These sessions were in very high demand up until Christmas but due to current restrictions we have had to suspend participation at the site. However, this has not impeded our determination to keep our participants engaged so we have developed an elaborate timetable of activities over Zoom across the whole week and linked our core members and our daily participants in so that they can all keep active and connected. Going forward we have extensive but realistic plans to further develop our site this year. First on the list is a new cabin to house our multisensory equipment as well as the creation of a sensory garden. We plan to add fitness equipment and develop a market garden where the participants can take ownership of planting, growing and distributing house plants, fruit and vegetables. Further down the line we hope to create a cookery school where we can teach valuable life learning skills. We have many reasons for highlighting our charity at this time. Firstly, we wish to share the details of our new L'Arche Village far and wide in the hope that we reach out to families who may need our valuable services. We also wish to engage with any and all community groups who might be interested in using our facilities once we can open up safely.

If you wish to connect with us or receive any further information, you can do this by calling the office on 028 90641088 or email us at thevillage@larchebelfast.org.uk

Mary Harris

L'Arche

Dear Member

As I write this note on a snowy Saturday in February I find myself thinking about the lovely promises March brings us each year as daffodils start blooming and the days get brighter and longer. Indeed you may already be enjoying the beauty of Spring as you read this! March is certainly a month of hope and promise but it also includes a special day for members of the Mothers' Union across the world. In 1897 the Mothers' Union formally adopted the 25th March, as its yearly day of prayer, intercession and thanksgiving. It is a day when members remember the Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary and Mary's faithful response as recorded in the Gospel of Luke Chapter 1; verses 26-38. In normal times plans would already have been made for a Diocesan Festival Service to take place but as this is not now possible, I thought you might like to read the following as part of your prayers and reflection on 25th March. It is an extract from a service prepared by Mary Sumner House in 2020.

In her initial response to the Lord's call upon her life, Mary declared her hope and confidence in the word of God.

The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

³⁴'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'³⁵The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

³⁶Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.

³⁷**For no word from God will ever fail.'**

³⁸**'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Luke 1:30-38**

The truth of Mary's hope and confidence in the word of God was evident to those who had also encountered the Lord's divine intervention in their life.

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

⁴⁵Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her! ⁴⁶And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. Luke 1:39-47

At the time of Mary's greatest sorrow her hope and confidence in all God had spoken to her through the years kept her faithful to her dying son on the cross and she was blessed once more by the word of the Lord.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' ²⁷and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.'

From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. John 19:25-27

As the wonders of Pentecost approached Mary was to be found still following the word of her Lord as she joined in prayer and waited for the gift of the Spirit.

Jesus gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

⁵ For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Acts 1:4-5, 14

May Christ the Son of God, born of Mary, fill you with hope and confidence to trust his promises and follow his will.

Blessings.

Clare

Mothers' Union—Midday Prayers—March 2021
Rebuilding hope and confidence
Fasting and feasting in Lent

Monday: Hope

Fast from discouragements; feast on hope.

W.A. Ward, 1921-1994

In this season of Lent

**we fast from all which harms our soul
and gladly feast on the blessings of God.**

Hope in the One who has endured all things
that we might know freedom.

Hope in the One who has given us his Spirit
that we might have power.

Hope in the One who has loved us beyond death
that we might have life.

Hope in the One who prepares a place for us
that we might share eternity with him.

**For hope that endures,
we thank you Lord.**

Amen.

Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love
into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:5 (NRSV)

Tuesday: Prayer

Fast from problems that overwhelm; feast on prayer that undergirds.

W.A. Ward, 1921-1994

In this season of Lent

**we fast from all which harms our soul
and gladly feast on the blessings of God.**

**With faith and hope
we bring our prayers to God;
we draw near to him with joy.**

Let us be swift to approach our Lord.

His ear is open to our prayers.

His mercy draws us close;
his grace is all we need.

May we cherish these times:
precious moments with God
to pour out our hearts
and listen for his reply.

**With joy and praise
we bring our prayers to God;
we draw near to him with faith.**

Amen.

The Lord is close to everyone who prays to him, to all who truly pray to him.

Psalms 145:18 (NCV)

Wednesday: Truth

Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal truth.

W.A. Ward, 1921-1994

**In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul
and gladly feast on the blessings of God.**

When we are troubled by life's concerns

we seek the Lord for answers; to deliver us from our fears.

As we taste and see that the Lord is good

we are blessed by his protection and provision for our needs.

As we gaze upon our Saviour

and embrace the truth of his eternal love, may our lives reflect the glory of Christ.

For earth and sky will pass away

but the word of God endures forever.

Amen.

Based on Psalm 34

His loving kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord is everlasting.

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 117:2 (NASB 1995)

Thursday: Forgiveness

Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.

W.A. Ward, 1921-1994

**In this season of Lent
we fast from all which harms our soul
and gladly feast on the blessings of God.**

Jesus said, Father, forgive them,

for they do not know what they are doing.

Luke 23:34

Loving Saviour,

your words to me of total forgiveness

stop my appetite for bitterness

over others' hurtful words and deeds,

and drive me to prayer.

The glory of your compassion

overshadows my craving for justice

and drives me to worship.

Loving Saviour

forgive me when I deny others

that which you freely bestow.

How can I not forgive

when I have received such mercy?

Amen.

Be kind and compassionate to one another,

forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 4:32

Friday: Gratitude

Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.

W.A. Ward, 1921-1994

**In this season of Lent we fast from all which harms our soul
and gladly feast on the blessings of God.**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!

His love is everlasting and extends to all creation.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!

Bringing wholeness and peace beyond understanding.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!

His arms open wide welcoming home the prodigals.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!

His promises are sure

His kingdom shall last forever.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!

Amen.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
since as members of one body you were called to peace.

And be thankful.

Colossians 3:15

Saturday: Promises

Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.

W.A. Ward, 1921-1994

**In this season of Lent
we fast from all which harms our soul
and gladly feast on the blessings of God.**

Gracious God, we praise you for your promises:

for your steadfast love which is ever new
yet unchanging through the ages.

When we founder in our weakness,
your steadfast promises inspire us
as a rock upon which we depend.

You keep your unfailing word
to a thousand generations.

Your mercies never cease.

How gracious is our God!

**We feast on your promises
with thankful hearts.**

Amen.

I know the plans I have for you, promises the Lord,
plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

**MOTHERS' UNION ANNUAL DINNER—
AT HOME THIS YEAR!**
*(we were thinking of you all in February—
Carol and Hilda)*





Due to the continuing restrictions, St Finnian's Messy Church will again be online via YouTube and Facebook for the foreseeable future.

Dates for 2021 are set for 26th March, 25th June, 24th September and 26th November; although we do hope that our activities will be live in the church hall by September.

The theme for 2021 is **HOPE** which is central to all our lives both now and in the future. As the Messy Church team gets to work to organise the videos of crafts, songs and worship, please keep our plans in your thoughts and prayers.

Don't forget to look out for us on 26th March.

Thanks.

Alison McMurray





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.**

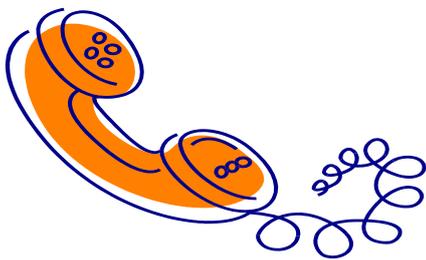
If you can't find it, please contact the church office and someone will be in touch.

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 **April** magazine to **office.cregagh@down.anglican.org** or telephone the Parish Office 90792793 by NOON on **Tuesday 9th March.**

Don't forget to check out the church website:

www.stfinnians.org



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