

ST Finnian's

MAY 2021

*Coming out of lockdown
Assessing where we are
Giving thanks
Praying for God to lead us into the
future*



Dear Friends

As we start to take baby steps in terms of coming out of lockdown there are certain things we maybe appreciate in a new way. I found it to be such a moving and beautiful thing to see people back in the church building to worship together on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Throughout lockdown I have appreciated so much the efforts of our technology team in making services available to everyone at home. We were greatly blessed by an array of marvellous speakers and inspiring interviews as we journeyed through Lent but there's something so special about being able to worship together in person.

The music of the organ, the recordings of our own choir, the care and attention that went into the simple but beautiful decoration of the church, all helped to create a very special atmosphere. Even if one is just an occasional attender at church services there is something very reassuring and encouraging about being able to worship together if the desire enters our soul. As a parent I have been so thankful to see children getting

back to school again after such a long period of online learning. Schools and teachers have done a magnificent job and we are greatly indebted to them for all their efforts on our children's behalf but nothing quite compares to getting back to school and seeing your friends and teachers in person again. We had the opportunity in the week after Easter to go on a family outing together for the first time in many months. We booked a day at the Montalto Estate where we could wander the trails, have a takeaway coffee and a bun and enjoy a picnic in the bracing wind. It just felt marvellous to be getting out together for a day out and we felt everything was very well monitored and distanced enabling everyone to feel safe. As this magazine goes to print, garden centres are reopening and there are further decisions being made about how things might be reopened in the next little while. The rolling out of the vaccination programme has been a great success and we are all indebted to the medical teams that have got through so much work so efficiently.

The knowledge of having some protection against the virus has given people confidence as they start to get out and about again. I have spoken to people and heard people interviewed on the radio who are making their first cautious journeys beyond their homes after 13 months of not getting outside their gardens. Whether it's a trip to a garden centre to buy some plants or a visit to a Sunday service it's a sign of hope, a belief that better days are to come. These are all important things to behold and to witness in our society at the present time.

For such a long time we were inclined to take all our freedoms for granted. We had so many choices constantly available to us. There were always places to go, people to visit, experiences to discover and participate in. The past year has reminded us not to take these things for granted. Everything has in that sense changed forever. The church will have a major task to rebuild and renew our spiritual life and community together.

Maybe there are valuable lessons we have learned through this experience. We appreciate just how precious people are in our lives. We value the services they offer, whether it's cooking and preparing food and drinks, to selling clothes or cutting hair. We recognise how important it is to stand with others and among others as we move into a new future. Instead of asking what can life bring me, we maybe ask different questions, like what can I bring to this life and offer to God and to others?

Are there things He has taught me or revealed to me about His faithfulness, His constancy and His love that might make a real difference to how we do things in the future? Are there values we need to rediscover, things we need to give up or possibilities we need to explore?

Before we move on too quickly, perhaps the first step is to assess where we are and give thanks that we have made it to this point. Maybe there are people to say thank you to, whether it is in person or by sending them a message.

By simply showing up and continuing to do their job these people have been crucial to our survival through this difficult season. I think of people like our GP and local pharmacy. I think of delivery people and postal workers.

I think of people who have posted sermons or teaching or services online that helped me to keep trusting and hold on to faith. I think of the quiet compassion of undertakers, the checkout staff at our local shops and supermarkets and garages. I think of those who have written and published books that have brought me to different places in my imagination or sowed stimulating thoughts through their words.

I think of those who have prayed with me or for me. I think of parishioners who have cared for and encouraged me and my family. I think of neighbours and friends who have looked after my mum's needs, taking her to appointments, collecting her groceries and prescriptions, reaching out to help and support and do things I couldn't because of restrictions.

To one and all I say at this point in time, thank you and let's keep working together to do all we can to be a community of love and care that spreads the fragrance of Jesus in all we seek to do.

Can I ask people to continue to phone people they know who might be isolated or going through difficult things?

Can I ask people to continue to pray for the life and witness and worship of the church?

Can I ask us to be careful and vigilant as we follow

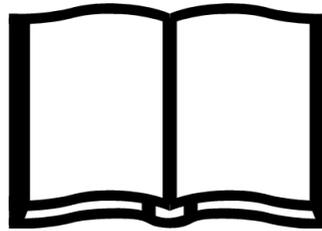
Government guidelines and follow the best advice to stay safe? Can I ask too that we be kind and patient with each other as we work out new ways and systems that will lead us under God into the future?

With very best wishes.

Yours sincerely
Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 02890 793822



From the Registers Christian Burial 2021:

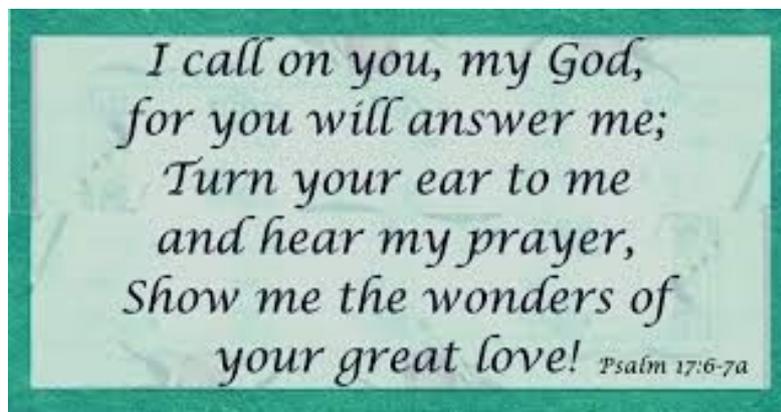


24th March

Margaret (Peg) Browne

PARISH PRAYER MEETINGS BY ZOOM

We have restarted our parish prayer time over Zoom to pray for our province and our church and the world around us. If you would like to join us at 7 pm on Thursdays just send an email to zoomtostfinnian@btconnect.com or contact the Rector.



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



St Finnian's Messy Church is going from strength to strength thanks to the dedication and commitment of the team members who organise it.

Our topic this year is **HOPE** and we are going to look at each letter of the word **HOPE** over our 2021 Messy Church sessions.

We started with 'H' for Honesty, which is so important in all our relationships with family, friends and God Himself.

We explored honesty through our talk from Jono, a story with Alison and crafts and puzzles from Mark, May and Carole.



The children were also offered a gift bag from Messy Church. It was full of craft materials, puzzles, chocolates and a children's Bible.



If you or someone you know would like to get involved with Messy Church and would like a gift bag, please contact Linda in the church office.

Tel: 028 9079 2793 (Tuesdays & Wednesdays 9.00am—2.00pm)

Thank you to everyone.

Jill McPeak

If you haven't seen us online yet, check out Messy Church on Facebook.com/StFinnians, the church website www.stfinnians.org and YouTube.



Where did our shoeboxes go to in 2020?

Last year our shoeboxes went to Nigeria. They were part of an amazing 265,975 gifts of love sent from all over the UK to children all over the world. Out of the total number of UK shoeboxes, 7,190 were sent to Nigeria.

Thank you to everyone who, despite the difficulties and the different ways to give this year, managed to donate their boxes.

Well done and thank you.

Jill McPeak

This is the story of your shoeboxes in pictures, for more details go to <https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk>



Prayers of thankfulness for the
COVID-19 vaccine

Dear Lord, we thank You for the wisdom of the scientists, for the courage of the trial volunteers, for the strength and compassion of the healthcare professionals, for the patience of the delivery workers, for all who have brought us to this moment. May this vaccine offer protection. May it offer strength. May it offer hope. Thank You Lord for sustaining us and enabling us to reach this moment.

Amen.

Thank you to all the scientists who toiled day and night so that I might receive this tiny vaccination that will protect me and everyone around the world. With the pandemic still raging, I am blessed to do my part to defeat it. Let this be the beginning of a new day, a new time of hope, of joy, of freedom and most of all, of health. I thank You God for blessing me with life, for sustaining my life and for enabling me to reach this significant moment.

Amen.

We thank you God, the Creator of cures, that You have endowed humankind with knowledge and imbued humanity with the understanding to find and to invent an inoculation to this pandemic. May it be Your will that this vaccine will prevent the spread of the pandemic and save the lives of millions throughout the world. In your name we pray,

Amen.

LIST OF NEW SELECT VESTRY MEMBERS

Rector

Michael Allen

Robert Crawford(Treasurer)

Neil Donaldson

Karen Gately (People's Glebewarden)

Catherine Hamilton (People's Churchwarden)

Stephen Geoghegan

Geoff Harman

Jim Haughey (Rector's Glebewarden)

Ingrid Johnston

Jonathan Johnston

Mike Johnston

Greg Kidd (Rector's Churchwarden)

Brian Lavery

Stephen Leckey

Linda Leonard (Secretary)

Trevor Smyth



PSNI warn of fraudsters impersonating police officers

Detectives from PSNI's Economic Crime Unit are warning the public to be extremely vigilant following multiple reports of criminals posing as police officers. Police have recently received numerous reports from residents across Northern Ireland stating that they have been contacted by people claiming to be officers asking them to withdraw money from their accounts and hand over bank cards, jewellery and other valuables. Detective Inspector Joanne Harris, from the Economic Crime Unit said: "Over recent days, we have seen an increase in the number of scams reported to us where fraudsters pose as police officers. Unfortunately, this has resulted in people losing large sums of money and valuables with some people being told they need to leave money in an envelope outside their house to be collected. Victims have been asked about how much money they keep in their house and are told not to let family members know that they have been contacted. One older person was accused of owing money whilst another person was enticed to leave their house with a sum of money to meet a fraudster. Luckily, this person's suspicions were raised and she did not lose any money. I am urgently advising the public to be vigilant at all times and to be aware that police officers will never call you and ask for cash, bank details or questions about valuable possessions. Criminals are continuously coming up with advanced and sophisticated ways of targeting people, especially those who are more vulnerable or older. If you have older relatives or family members, please take time to share this information with them so they can be fully aware of this type of scam. Our message is simple, never ever disclose any personal or banking details to anyone over the phone or online, no matter where they say they are calling from or how convincing they may seem." Protecting your personal information and banking details is extremely important. If you have received a call of this kind or if you are concerned by the intent of unsolicited calls, emails or letters, then please call police on the non-emergency number 101, make a report to Action Fraud via their website www.actionfraud.police.uk or by phoning 0300 123 2040. For further advice and information visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/scamwiseni or the ScamwiseNI Facebook page @scamwiseni

The Church of Ireland, alongside other Churches, is supporting the Scamwise NI campaign and other initiatives to prevent and encourage the reporting of scams.

Hello Everyone

I hope you all had a lovely Easter holiday and were able to meet up or be in contact with some family members and friends.

Some of our members have been asking about donating to the Overseas Fund in Mothers' Union. If anyone wishes to donate to Overseas could they please send the money directly to our Branch Treasurer,

Helen McKnight

21 Elsmere Heights

Belfast BT5 7TN

Tel 90798817

Please ensure that you provide Helen with your name and address so that she can acknowledge receipt. If you are paying by cheque, please make the cheque out to St. Finnian's Mothers' Union. If you have cash for Helen and you would like her to collect it, please contact her.

The Midday prayers for May are set out below.

Best Wishes to you all.

Carol Bell

Branch Secretary



Mothers' Union—Midday Prayers—May 2021
Rebuilding hope and confidence
Attributes of the Holy Spirit

Monday: Spirit of life

Jesus said: What gives life is God's Spirit; human power is of no use at all.
The words I have spoken to you bring God's life-giving Spirit.

John 6:63 (GNT)

Mighty God,
you came through your Spirit
and life was never the same again.

**Come to us now,
breathing new fire into our hearts,
new energy into our lives,
new life into our souls.
Transform our fear, anxiety and doubt,
filling us with confidence and faith.**

Move in us, we pray.

Open our minds to new horizons, new experiences
and a new way of looking at life.

And so may we live by the Spirit,
bearing rich fruit to your glory.

**Move in us, we pray,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Amen.

Tuesday: Spirit of truth

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father –
the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me.
When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

John 15:26; 16:13

**Loving Lord,
send your Holy Spirit
to inspire us with your truth
and reveal Christ to the world.**

Holy Spirit,
light up our lives with the truth of God.
Be the one who accompanies us
and guides us back to the way of truth
when our feet should stray from the path.

In a world which revels in uncertainty
write the clarity of God's Word
on hearts and minds;
bear witness to the love of Christ
and bring conviction of faith.

Amen.

Wednesday: Spirit of friendship

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another friend to help you and to be with you forever. Unless I go away, the Friend will not come to help you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

John 14:16; 16:7 (NIRV)

**Holy Spirit,
we treasure your friendship;
your advocacy on our behalf.**

Holy Spirit, precious friend,
we praise you for your comfort in times of pain;
for your counsel in times of confusion;
for your strength in times of weakness.

We thank you for your help
when circumstances overwhelm;
your constant presence with us
when others fade from our lives.

**Holy Spirit,
your friendship brings joy to our hearts;
your perfect companionship moves our souls
to wonder and to praise.**

Amen.

Thursday: Spirit of adoption

You received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children.

Romans 8:15-16 (CEB)

Deep within our souls the Spirit's assurance dwells;
causing us to cry out:

Abba, Father.

We are the children of God.

Nestled in our hearts the Spirit's assurance soothes;
causing us to whisper:

Abba, Father.

We are the children of God.

Set upon our minds the Spirit's assurance convinces;
causing us to declare:

Abba, Father.

We are the children of God.

Thanks be to our heavenly Father,
by whom we have been made family,
and assured of our eternal adoption
through the Holy Spirit.

We celebrate with praise!

Amen.

Friday: Spirit of freedom

Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 Corinthians 3:17

**Praise be to God that the Spirit sets us free
to walk in grace.**

Amazing grace!

We are set free from the shame of sin and clothed in righteousness.

All praise to the Holy Spirit; all glory to his name.

Amazing grace!

We are set free from failing God and share in the victory of Christ.

All praise to the Holy Spirit; all glory to his name.

Amazing grace!

We are set free from the fear of death and given fullness of life.

When the Spirit makes us free we are free indeed.

All praise to the Holy Spirit;

all glory to his name.

Amen.

Saturday: Spirit of transformation

We are being transformed into Christ's likeness
with ever-increasing glory,

which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18

**Holy Spirit,
transform our lives
that we may reflect the glory of Christ.**

Breathe in me O Holy Spirit
that my thoughts may all be holy;

Act in me O Holy Spirit
that my works, too, may be holy;

Draw my heart O Holy Spirit
that I love but what is holy;

Strengthen me O Holy Spirit
to defend that is holy;

Guard me then O Holy Spirit
that I always may be holy.

Amen.

St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)

**Holy Spirit,
we embrace your work of transformation
from the gloom of sin to the glory of Christ.**

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.**

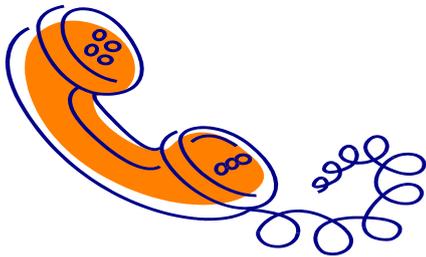
If you can't find it, please contact the church office and someone will be in touch.

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 **June** magazine to **office.cregagh@down.anglican.org** or telephone the Parish Office 90792793 by NOON on **Tuesday 4th May.**

Don't forget to check out the church website:

www.stfinnians.org



Find us on Facebook!
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Registered with
The Charity Commission for
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