

ST Finnian's

DECEMBER 2021

*Welcoming the light of Christ
into our darkness.*



*Details of Advent & Christmas
services inside.*

Dear Friends

We have reached that point on the calendar when many people who travel to work are leaving in darkness and returning home in darkness. We feel a drop in the temperatures and the leaves are falling at a rate when we find it hard to keep up with them. In the gloom and darkness of winter many people feel a heaviness in their spirit and that can lead to changes in mood and even feelings of depression. The news is full of concern about rising numbers in cases of COVID-19 and how overstretched many hospitals are at the present time. There continues to be a high level of uncertainty about restrictions and various measures that health experts are recommending in order to keep people safe. There are others involved in business who want to see restrictions being lifted in order to allow people to come out and spend and boost the economy after the challenges of the past 20 months. Here in St. Finnian's, we are trying to offer services that mean a lot to our parishioners at this time of year. We hope to have an Advent Carol Service, some Thursday night services during 3

Thursdays in December sharing Advent hope and the Service of 9 Lessons and Carols on the Sunday before Christmas. We will also be sharing the First Communion of Christmas at 11pm on Christmas Eve and enjoying a Christmas Morning family celebration at 10am. We recently had the experience of one of our household testing positive for COVID-19 and in order to protect everyone else, we were advised to isolate for 10 days. All the best laid plans for that time had to be shelved because of the importance of stopping the potential spread of the virus. We can make the best plans we can in our current circumstances but without warning, the goalposts can suddenly shift. One of the tremendous encouragements of this season if you are a person of faith is that Jesus will enter our world afresh during this season of Advent and Christmas. If you engage with him and make space in your heart to receive Him He wants to find a home with you wherever you are. That's a beautiful thing to connect into but it's not as straightforward as it sounds.

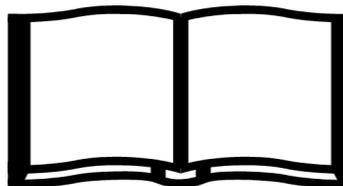
There seems to be a myriad of things that will distract us away. We get so busy at this time of year with buying presents, decorating the house, preparing food for those family members and friends we hope can join us around our table. We also feel acutely the pain of remembering those who are no longer physically with us and the weight of our burdens seems heavier to carry in this season. We have asked people to book in to some of our popular services over this season and we recognise that with the current restrictions not everyone will manage to come in person. That is why we encourage those who can, to avail of the technology that allows services to be livestreamed and recorded. If you can't come on the day, there is the opportunity to come on a day and time that works best for you. My little word of advice is to try to make that time and book it for that spiritual purpose. If it's a Tuesday or Wednesday night rather than a Sunday, let's engage as fully as we can at the time we have allocated or

designated to our spiritual preparations for this season. If you need help with booking please speak to one of our Churchwardens or phone Linda in the parish office on Tuesday or Wednesday mornings. I always get excited to think about the light breaking into the darkness. I rejoice in the birth of our Saviour who has come to bring new life and hope and meaning to all who search for those things in this life. We hope to see many in a socially distanced way in the coming weeks as we deliver cards with information about our special services and events. If there's anyone or anything you would like us to pray for please let us know and we would be glad to do that. Andy and his family join us all in the Rectory to wish everyone a blessed Advent and Christmas. Thank you for all you have done throughout this past year to support the church, to phone and stay in touch with people and to take an interest in God's work in other parts of the world.

With very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 028 90793822

From the Registers 2021



Christian Burial

- 18th November - Victoria (Vicky) Millar
David McClements (Clem) Millar**
- 26th November - Gladys Walker**

Holy Baptism

- 4th November - Arthur Morrison
(son of Sandra & Richard)**
- 14th November - Patricia Vogan
(daughter of Agnes & the late Thomas)**
- 18th November - Georgia Andrews
(daughter of Christine & Derek)**



ST. FINNIAN'S TODDLERS



Just a note to say that our Toddlers' Group is going well and to remind you that places are currently limited due to the Covid situation. Tickets can be pre-booked through our website at www.stfinnians.org We have a Christmas party planned for Monday 6th December which will be our last meeting for 2021. We wish everyone a happy and safe Christmas and good health for 2022.

We will see you all again on Monday 10th January 2022.



SAMARITAN'S CHRISTMAS SHOE BOX APPEAL 2021

I just wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who managed to get their shoe boxes filled and into church or donated online this year. It's a wonderful gift and this year it seems they are even more needed as we look across the world. I have collected around 50 boxes and have donated some online for people too. They have been dropped at the collection point in Belfast and are on their way across the world. I don't know where they are going to yet but I will let you know as soon as I find out.

Many thanks again.

Jill McPeak



Advent Services (Dates for your diary)

On the first 3 Thursdays in December at 7.30pm we have a very exciting and diverse group of speakers who will be coming to share why faith is important to them at our short Advent Services.

On Thursday 2nd December we look forward to welcoming Melanie Grimsley who shared recently on a programme with Stephen Nolan about finding faith. Melanie survived a terrible car fire which claimed the life of her sister as a child and has a very inspiring story to share.

On Thursday 9th December we look forward to welcoming fireman turned Evangelist, Keith Mitchell (Mitch) from Crown Jesus Ministries.

On Thursday 16th December Parishioner Dorothy Callan will share her story of how faith has impacted her life.

We hope these services will be livestreamed and look forward to welcoming our speakers.

Services for November/December



Sunday 28th November (1st Sunday of Advent)

11.00am Morning Prayer
7.00pm Advent Carol Service

(Please book online for both services)

Sunday 5th December (2nd Sunday of Advent)

11.00am Morning Prayer
7.00pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 12th December (3rd Sunday of Advent)

11.00am Morning Prayer
7.00pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 19th December (4th Sunday of Advent)

11.00am Morning Prayer
7.00pm Service of 9 Lessons & Carols

(Please book online for both services)

Friday 24th December (Christmas Eve)

11.00pm The First Communion of Christmas

(Please book online)

Saturday 25th December (Christmas Day)

10.00am A Family Celebration of Christmas

Sunday 26th December (1st Sunday of Christmas)

11.00am Holy Communion

(Please book online)

NO EVENING SERVICE





BOOK ONLINE NOW

**Remember to book online for
Sunday Morning & Christmas Services**

Just a reminder that if you would like to attend the Sunday morning 11am service, it is still necessary to book online using the online registration form available on our website and Facebook page. ***This also applies to our evening Carol Services on Sunday 28th November, Sunday 19th December as well as our Christmas Eve service.***

If you don't use the internet, you can reserve a place by phoning Linda in the parish office on 028 90792793 on either Tuesdays or Wednesdays between 9am and 2pm.

Alternatively, you can reserve a place with one of our Churchwardens the previous Sunday.

The 11am service will continue to be livestreamed on YouTube to enable those who can't attend in person to worship with us. The Advent and Christmas Carol services will also be livestreamed. The dial-in service will also continue to be available for those who don't use the internet on 028 93447225.

**PARISH PRAYER MEETINGS
BY ZOOM**

**Our Thursday evening parish prayer times over Zoom will not take place during the month of December due to our special Advent and Christmas services.
We hope to resume again in the New Year.**



80th birthday celebrations for Amy!

Our former Churchwarden, Amy Wall celebrated her 80th birthday in October and what a fabulous octogenarian she is! Amy wanted to say a few words of thanks to all her St. Finnian's friends.

I wish to thank all my friends who recently gathered to celebrate my 80th birthday and for their many gifts and cards. It was a wonderfully happy occasion being able to greet old friends again and reminisce while enjoying tea and a scrumptious birthday cake baked by Tom.

My sincere thanks to everyone for making the day special.





**The Leprosy
Mission**

THE LEPROSY MISSION—USED STAMPS

Many of you have very kindly collected your used postage stamps in the past to donate to The Leprosy Mission. From 31st December 2021, The Leprosy Mission will no longer be accepting donations of used postage stamps. If you have any stamps you would like to donate before then, please put them in a sealed bag or envelope and leave them at the back of the church **by Sunday 12th December.** This will enable the delivery of the stamps by the end of the year. ***Thank you to everyone for all your support over the years.***

DONATION BOX

MISSION BOX CONTRIBUTIONS

If you would like your Mission Box contributions to be included in the 2021 distribution to charities, please leave your box at the back of the church **by Sunday 12th December.**

Robert Crawford (Hon. Treasurer)



CAP (Christians Against Poverty) Christmas Appeal 2021

This past year has been difficult for a lot of families, particularly for those who have contacted CAP for help with their debt due to spiralling energy costs and the withdrawal of the Universal Credit uplift. With the added expenditure of Christmas, we want to help as many of our clients as possible through these cold, difficult winter months. Your contribution will enable us to help with top-ups of gas, electricity and oil and provide toys for their children on Christmas morning, along with other support throughout the year. We will ensure they also receive a substantial Christmas hamper with food and treats to ensure Christmas Day is enjoyable and worry-free.

There are three ways you can contribute:

1. Online through the charity giving page <https://www.kindlink.com/fundraising/willowfield-parish-community-association/cap>
2. Online banking: Willowfield Parish Comm Assoc
950114/80033383 Ref: CAP Christmas
3. Cheque made payable to "WPCA" posted to CAP, Micah Centre, 149a My Lady's Road, Belfast BT6 8FE

I speak on behalf of the clients when I say 'thank you' for your generosity and care shown in this practical way.

Be blessed this Christmas.

James Myles

Belfast Central Debt Centre Manager

(e) jamesmyles@capuk.org (m)07599 379839

Christmas Prayers

Lord and Giver of all good things, the Magi travelled for miles to bring the Christ child the first Christmas presents. So may we, too, remember with thankful hearts the love that comes with each present we open. We also thank you for the love you have for each of us, and we thank you for the many gifts that you give us, especially the gift of life itself.

Amen.

Jesus, the Light of the World, as we celebrate your birth, may we begin to see the world in the light of understanding you give us. As you chose the lowly, the outcasts, and the poor to receive the greatest news the world had ever known, so may we worship you in meekness of heart. May we also remember our brothers and sisters less fortunate than ourselves in this season of giving.

Amen.

Dear Lord, Christmas can be a sad and difficult time.

*Thank you for the remembrance of loved ones
no longer with us;*

*for their inspiring words,
encouragement, love and support,
an example for us to follow.*

*May their legacy be seen
in the people we have become,
and may we always be thankful.*

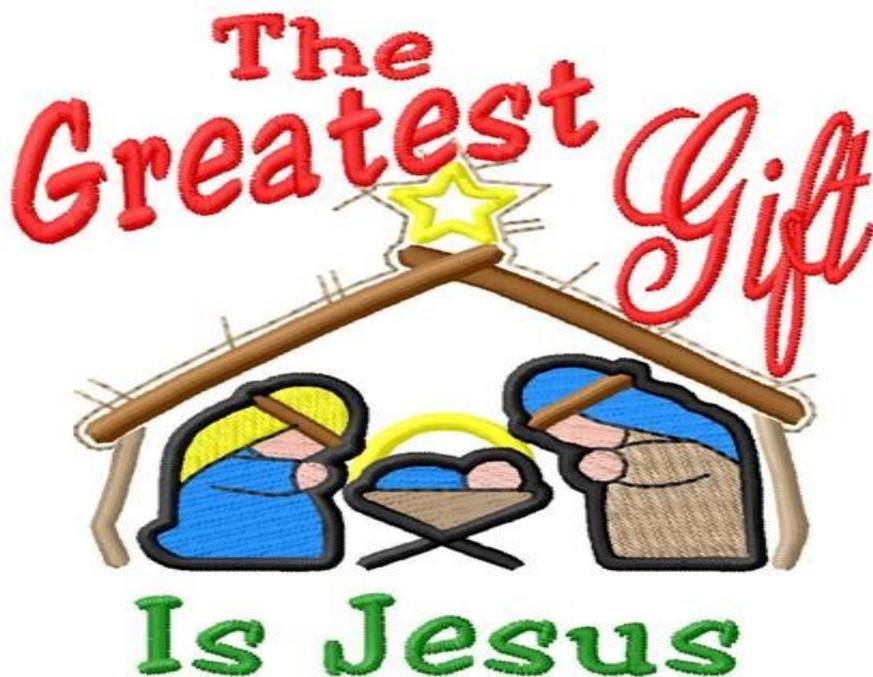
We ask this in your name Lord.

Amen.

A Prayer About the True Gift of Christmas

The gifts I'd leave beneath your tree,
Aren't those that you can touch or see,
No toys meant just for pointless play,
But gifts to bless you every day.
The gift of friendship warm and true,
Is one that I would leave for you.
Good health and happiness and cheer
To keep you smiling through the year.
The gift of peace that comes from God,
With prayer to guide each path you trod.
And when your heart has lost its song,
The gift of hope to cheer you on.
These are the gifts I'd leave for you.

Kay Hoffman



Once in a Manger

Once in a manger, a long time ago,
Before there was Santa and reindeer and snow,
A star shone down on humble beginnings below
Of a baby just born who the world would soon know.

Never before had there been such a sight.
Would the Son of a King have to suffer this plight?
Are there no armies to lead? Are there no battles to fight?
Shouldn't He conquer the world and demand His birthright?

No, this frail little infant asleep in the hay
Would change the whole world with the words He would say.
Not about power or demanding His way,
But mercy and loving and forgiving God's way.

For only through humbleness would the battle be won,
As shown by the actions of God's only true son.
Who gave up His life for the sins of everyone,
Who saved the whole world when His journey was done.

Many years have now passed since that night long ago
And now we have Santa and reindeer and snow
But down in our hearts the true meaning we know,
It is the birth of that child that makes Christmas so.

Tom Krause



Pilates going strong



Pilates has arrived and is fast becoming a part of the furniture at St. Finnian's, with a regular group filling the Huston Hall for their weekly work-out. Even the cold and damp evenings haven't discouraged this faithful cohort from turning up, exercise mats in hand, to stretch and strengthen muscles they never knew they had. Special mention should be made of the pelvic floor muscles which everyone has now been able to locate and engage! I have really enjoyed leading the classes and look forward each week to seeing the folks who come along, and the craic that goes along with that. As I mentioned in last month's magazine, the aim of Pilates is to develop a strong 'core' and a properly aligned and flexible spine, which will help combat the assaults of modern life that often lead to a poor posture and lower back pain. It's also been said that an 'old' spine (weak and inflexible) will make a person appear older than their years, whereas a 'young' spine (strong and flexible) will make them appear younger. This alone should be incentive enough to take action! It's important to note that while everyone in the group is starting from a different position regarding general health and exercise history, the exercises we're doing can and will be adjusted to suit individual circumstances. A key principle is to work from where you are and improve what you have regardless of what others may be capable of. Finally, to say that I've been impressed by the commitment and effort that everyone has been putting in on a Wednesday evening would be an understatement and, in particular, I have to mention the levels of concentration I've witnessed. Pilates is a 'mind and body' exercise programme – you need to be aware of what each part of the body is doing during an exercise, especially those bits we need to isolate and focus the effort on, so thanks again to you all and here's to the next class.

Why not come along and see for yourself? Participants are asked to make a donation of £3.00 per class with proceeds going to church funds. If you are interested and wish to take part or want to find out more about Pilates, please contact me by phone (+447941368546) or email at jcwworth@yahoo.co.uk

John Waterworth

Hello Everyone



By now you will

have received Clare's letter which sets out the arrangements for our opening meeting and the arrangements for the election of the new Branch Committee. I know you will all join me in thanking Clare for being our Branch Leader over the last 3 years. She has done an excellent job during what has been a very difficult time due to the COVID outbreak and the subsequent restrictions which had to be observed . Our thanks too to the outgoing Branch Committee, they too have been an excellent support to Clare and we were truly blessed to have them . Our best wishes go to the new Branch Committee and especially to Elizabeth Walker (Branch Leader) and Angela Harvey (Branch Secretary) .

The Diocesan Advent Service this year is being held in

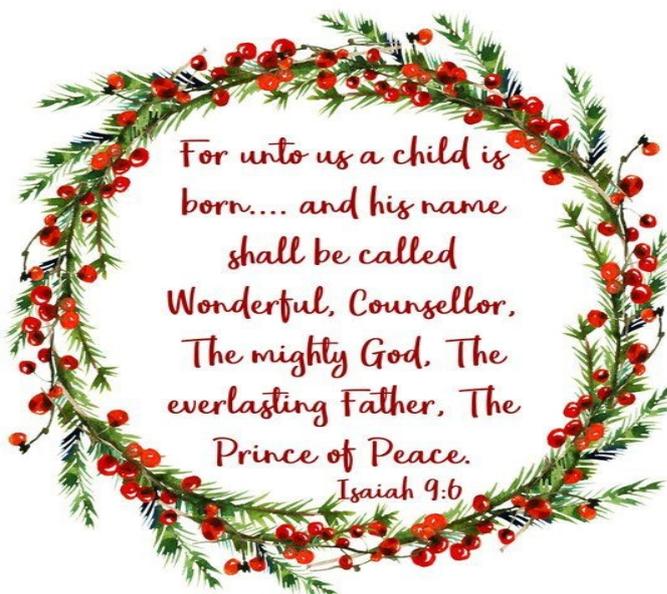
St Ignatius Church , Carryduff on Wednesday 8th

December at 7.30pm. If anyone wishes to attend they should let me know as soon as possible as this year the numbers will be limited due to the COVID regulations.

We hope you all have a lovely Christmas and a very happy New Year. We look forward to seeing as many of you who can make it to our meeting on **2nd December at 8pm following the Advent Service in the church.**

Finally, see opposite page for December's Midday prayers.

Carol Bell, Branch Secretary



Mothers' Union—Midday Prayers—December 2021
Rebuilding hope and confidence
Advent words of hope

Monday: 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.

John 1:1-2, 14

The Word became flesh and lived among us.

In wonder and reverence we bring him our praise.

The Word:

The one who spoke the earth into being,
who flung stars into space, who set the planets in orbit
and breathed life into humankind.

The Word:

The Son of God, Light of the World;
fully God, fully man; our Rescuer.

The Word:

To all who received him

He gave the right to be called children of God.

The Word became flesh and lived among us.

With gratitude and joy we bring him our praise.

Amen.

Tuesday: Words of hope

A voice of one calling:

'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord;

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,

and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Isaiah 40:3, 5

In the lonely places:

the wilderness where we stand forlorn

windswept and alone

your voice calls out

Prepare the way for the Lord.

In the dark places:

where the shadows embrace our tears

your voice calls out

Prepare the way for the Lord.

Prepare the way for the Lord!

He is the strength that comes to our weakness,

he is the light that comes to our darkness.

The Lord is near!

Prepare the way,

and sing of his glory,

all his people.

Amen.

Wednesday: Names of the Messiah

He will be called

**Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

Isaiah 9:6

Wonderful Counsellor, our hope is in you.

Give us your wisdom throughout our lives.

Direct our paths in the ways of grace
that we may follow you well.

Mighty God, our strength is in you.

Hold us firm in times of weakness.

Fill us with the power of the Spirit
that we may serve you well.

Everlasting Father, our trust is in you.

Surround us with your steadfast love.

Adopt us into your family
that we may abide in you.

Prince of Peace, our hope is in you.

Quieten our hearts in troubled times.

Assure us of your constant presence
that we may have no fear.

Amen.

Thursday: Words of praise

Mary said:

My soul magnifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

The Mighty One has done great things for me –
holy is his name.

Luke 1:46-47, 49

We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;

Our souls magnify the Lord;

With our mouths we proclaim God's faithfulness to all generations

Our spirits rejoice in God our saviour.

We declare that your steadfast love is established forever;

**His mercy is to those who fear him
from generation to generation.**

Your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

**He has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.**

You are our God and the Rock of our salvation.

We will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;

Our souls magnify the Lord.

Amen.

Friday: Good news

The angel said to them,
Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy
for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour
has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2: 10-11

Like the choir of angels on the night of his birth
we sing your praise and tell out the good news.
Like the shepherds, returning from the manger,
we give you the glory for all that we have heard and seen.
Like the Magi, kneeling in wonder,
we offer our gifts as a token of our love
and sign of our commitment.

Amen.

**Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth grace and peace to those
on whom his favour rests.**

Amen.

Saturday: Words of truth

Mary treasured all these words
and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2.19

**In this Advent season
we ponder in our hearts
the riches of God's mystery –
that Christ has come to live in us
giving the hope of glory.**

May this eternal truth be always on our hearts
that the God who breathed this world into being
placed stars into the heavens
and designed a butterfly's wing
is the God who entrusted his life
to the care of ordinary people,
became vulnerable that we might know
how strong is the power of Love.

A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp
A mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore.

**We open our hearts
to the riches of your presence.**

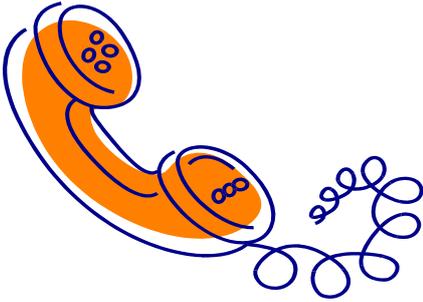
Come Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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 BY EMAIL

Why not receive your magazine by email and help the environment by cutting down on the use of paper? If you would like to receive your magazine this way, contact Linda in the church office on Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 9.00am - 2.00pm. Tel. 028 90792793 or email office.cregagh@down.anglican.org

Magazine

Please send articles for inclusion in the **January** magazine to **office.cregagh@down.anglican.org** or telephone the Parish Office 90792793 by NOON on **Tuesday 7th December.**

Don't forget to check out the church website:

www.stfinnians.org



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Registered with
The Charity Commission for
Northern Ireland NIC101977