

ST Finnian's

MARCH 2025



*See inside for details
of our
Lenten services*

Dear Friends

As Spring enters our consciousness with the brighter evenings and people descending on garden centres to get plants and seeds, are there lessons we can learn that would be of relevance to our church situation?

In recent months many are aware of the challenges we face in attracting new people, with a particular concern about the lack of younger people and young families. This is not a problem peculiar to our church but it's one that is being felt across the denominations.

Sometimes we get inspired when people share their stories and experiences with us. One of the inspiring stories from the life of our Diocese over the past 10 years or so has been the investment in church plants in different parts of the Diocese. This has been built upon by the central church as it has invested resources in pioneer ministry. This is a movement which seeks to train people for a new type of ministry. Pioneers build community and connection and create new expressions of church which builds a bridge with those who have felt disconnected from traditional models and expressions of

church. It's hard work sowing those seeds and trying to establish those connections and yet it's a work that is bearing fruit. People are still finding faith and hope in Jesus and it can bring transformation and new life in the community.

Church planters are sometimes placed in existing churches or sometimes they create a new expression of church in a local school or community centre and reach a whole section of the population that traditional churches don't manage to connect with. Over the season of Lent on Thursday evenings I have invited 5 church planters to come and share the story of what they are doing in diverse and interesting projects across the Diocese. We will hear of some who are working in loyalist estates, with refugees and asylum seekers and with students and young professionals. It may generate some ideas for us about creative ways to reach out to our local community. It might not, but it will be really valuable to hear these stories and we hope people will come to hear them and join us in praying for that important work across the Diocese.

During Holy Week each evening we will have special services and we are inviting some voices of new incumbents which people may not have heard before to unpack the events of Holy Week. On Monday evening we will hear from Revd Clare Kakuru, the Rector of Maghaberry. On Tuesday we hear from Revd Dr Claire Aylward, Priest-in-charge of Kilmore and Inch. On Wednesday we hear from the Revd Eben Grobbelaar, Priest-in-charge of Killyleagh. On Thursday we will celebrate the Last Supper or Holy Communion and strip the altar in preparation for a day of prayer and reflection on Good Friday. At 12 noon we will have a special community outreach service with a drama group from the Methodist Church called Play it by Ear, followed by some light refreshments in the hall. In the evening we have the powerful service of Tenebrae and then joyful celebrations of Holy Communion on Easter Day. These are the central events of our faith and we hope we will be drawn into their reality as we observe them together. Many will be aware of the

extensive damage caused by falling trees during Storm Eowyn. The Select Vestry have been taking advice from tree surgeons about removing the trees that have fallen and we may have to take down some other trees which are deemed to be in a diseased state or have the potential to fall on our church or hall and pose a risk to life or property.

These are never easy decisions that are taken lightly but if things are pointed out to us, we have a duty of care to all who use our premises to make the church and its grounds as safe an environment as possible. When it comes to people's safety, we have to take the best advice available to us and follow the guidance of the central church in responding. We are also conscious that this type of work will be expensive to carry out but we do not have a choice in this situation especially as we see the increasing frequency of serious weather events affecting the country. We take the opportunity in this month's magazine to wish one of our younger parishioners well as he has been selected to represent Ireland in ice hockey at a tournament in Canada.

Congratulations to Elijah Saunders on being selected and we wish you well as you embark on this exciting journey. Hopefully the first of many representative appearances! We would love you to be proactive in inviting friends and neighbours and members of the local community to our special services for Lent and Holy Week and our prayer is that many would have a special encounter with the Lord through these opportunities. With very best wishes.

Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 02890 793822

PRAYER WARRIOR

Do you have a concern or problem and would like someone to pray for you? If so, contact Robin by text or email, he will be willing to help. Your contact will be completely confidential and no details will be passed on to anyone else unless you want them to.

Mobile:07513947504

Email:robsmill24@gmail.com

MID WEEK LENTEN SERVICES



Our midweek Lenten services will begin on Thursday 13th March and will run each Thursday at 7.30pm throughout Lent as we look forward to hearing the exciting and varied stories of church planters across the Diocese. These short 35 minute services will be a great devotional focus for the season of Lent. During Lent these services will be livestreamed and parish prayers over Zoom will be suspended.

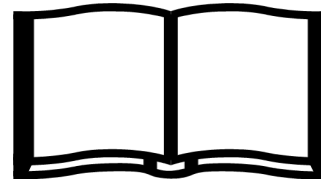
ELIJAH'S COFFEE MORNING

The Saunders family would like to thank everyone very much for their support of Elijah's coffee morning. A grand total of £1900 was raised. Your generosity was very much appreciated and we will keep you up to date with Elijah's Canadian ice hockey journey.

CRECHE

A creche is now available during the 11am service. Feel free to leave your children over to the hall at any point before or during the service.

From the Registers



Christian Burial

30th January - Rachel (Rae) McIntyre

31st January - Carole Veitch

7th February - Walter Hughes

Wednesday morning communion & prayers for the sick



The Wednesday morning communion service with prayers for the sick takes place on **Wednesdays at 10.30am.**

Everyone is very welcome to join us for tea/coffee, scones and friendship in the Sextons' Room after the service.

One of our faithful helpers, Jean Buchanan, celebrated her birthday in February. It was time for "Queen Jean" to be spoilt for a change as she selflessly serves all of us each week along with Hilda, Liz and Angela. Ladies - we are very grateful for everything you do.





Hello everyone,
Christian ladies of the Cook Islands have written this year's service which will be held in St. Bernadette's Church, Rosetta Road, at 8.00pm on Friday 7th March. With the title, "I made you wonderful", this service invites us to recognise that God created each of us with loving care. We are unique and special.

Everyone is welcome to join us as we participate in a wave of prayer which encircles the globe.

Julie Cunningham

LADIES' FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Hello Ladies,
Signs of spring and new life are all around. Hopefully we can discard our hats and scarves when we come out to the March meetings. Jill Robinson, from the local charity Flourish, will be our guest on Wednesday 12th at 2.00pm. Flourish is dedicated to supporting people whose lives have been impacted by human trafficking or other forms of exploitation. This will doubtless be a revealing and thought-provoking afternoon. Our guests on Wednesday 26th will be Bobbi Rai-Purdy and Julia O'Hara from NI Opera. Bobbi was involved in the event held for local children in the hall at Hallowe'en. Julia will be telling us about NI Opera's upcoming programme.

We look forward to seeing you.

Julie 07814928398

MIND MATTERS

Over this past year we have been running a series of events focussing on the topic of mental health thanks to a grant received from Mind Matters, a central fund within the Church of Ireland to facilitate events around this important subject. This month we are encouraging people who might find it helpful to come to a special evening in Knockbreda parish on **Tuesday March 4th at 7.30pm.** The event takes the form of a concert exploring grief, faith and hope through song, readings and poetry performed by Michael J Tinker. It looks at the difficult subject of bereavement and offers a clear message of hope and comfort. The event is free although donations are welcome.

DIVINE HEALING MINISTRIES' SERVICE

The Divine Healing Ministries' service will be held on Tuesday 25th March at 7.30pm. The guest speaker will be Dr Stephen Rodgers. Everyone is very welcome.

Norman Sleator

FUNDRAISING CONCERT

On 28th March at 7.30pm, The Police Choir will be holding a fundraising concert in St. Finniains church at 7.30pm. Conducted by our own parish organist Mark Mcgrath and accompanied by Daniel Clements, the concert promises something for everyone. The suggested donation is £15 and there will be some surprise guests. Profits will be divided between The Police Choir and parish funds.

TREES

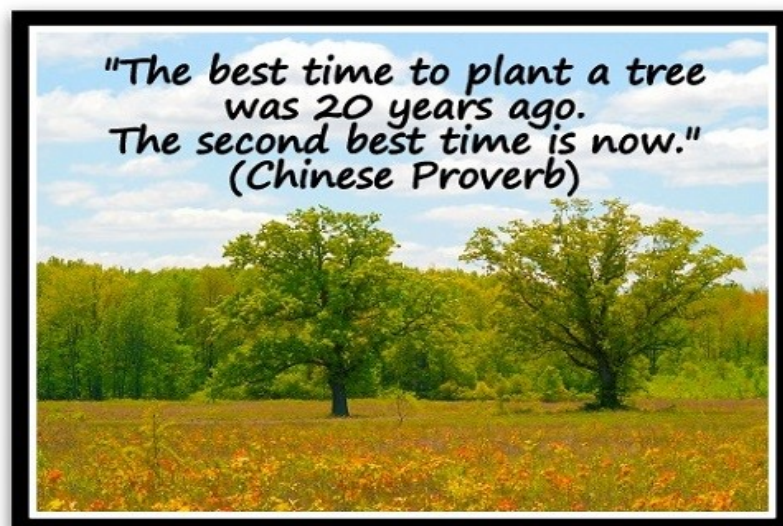
Those more perceptive members of the congregation may have noticed recently a little bit of woodwork (!) on the grass in front of the Garden of Remembrance. The recent storms have caused damage to a number of trees around the grounds of the church. The large tree which was formerly in the front grounds between the Garden of Remembrance and the road, was badly damaged in the first storm – one of its two main trunks was severed and came down. This left a badly damaged remainder, relying on a very thin section of trunk where the split had occurred. Any reasonable wind would have been a danger and consequently we had no option but to cut it down before the next storm brought it down.



We have a number of other trees which have been damaged and these will have to be cut down in due course. Small/medium size trees between the halls and the roadway have been badly damaged and will be completely cleared. The Vestry is considering the approach to some trees which escaped damage in the storms but which constitute a severe threat to our church buildings. Several trees are in positions where, if they were to come down, very severe damage would be caused, rendering the church or halls unusable for many months and requiring enormous expenditure to rectify.

Some of these trees may have been weakened in the recent storms, without displaying any observable damage. As part of our consideration of the situation, we have consulted the church authorities regarding the removal of trees. They have responded quickly, giving us permission to go ahead with removal. I am sure hundreds of churches across Ireland are in the same position. Standard church advice is to plant two trees for each tree which has been removed and we will try to achieve this. As can be seen in the sheer size of the tree which now lies on the ground below the Garden of Remembrance, heavy equipment will be required to remove the timber from this and other trees around the grounds and this will be arranged in due course. As you will appreciate, all of the companies involved in tree removal are presently inundated with work across the country. A figure of 10,000 fallen trees has been quoted for Mount Stewart estate alone, so in many respects we have suffered lightly. **Some trees in our church grounds may have been planted for a specific reason, e.g. a dedication to a family member. If you are aware of any such circumstances, please inform any member of the Vestry, the Glebewardens or the Rector as soon as possible.** Finally, we all know how curious children can be, but it will be most important that they stay away from any damaged trees or trees/branches on the ground until we can arrange complete removal.

Jim Haughey
Glebewarden



Services for March



Sunday 2nd March (The Sunday before Lent)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am Connect Service (Huston Hall)
7.00pm Holy Communion

Sunday 9th March (The 1st Sunday in Lent)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am Holy Communion
7.00pm Compline

Sunday 16th March (The 2nd Sunday in Lent)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am Morning Prayer
7.00pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 23rd March (The 3rd Sunday in Lent)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am Morning Prayer
7.00pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 30th March (The 4th Sunday in Lent)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am A Service of Wholeness & Healing
7.00pm Evening Prayer

COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLBEING FAIR

The Mind Matters Community Health & Wellbeing Fair was attended by a wide variety of community and voluntary sector organisations. Visitors were able to pick up information on a range of health matters for themselves or those they care for and to speak to staff and volunteers. RNID gave details of their free hearing aid clinics which are held every month. People can have new batteries fitted, receive advice on tinnitus, hearing loss and services available. The next walk-in service dates are Wednesday 12th March 10.15am - 11.45 am at Orangefield Presbyterian Church and at Holywood Arches Wellbeing & Treatment Centre, 1, Westminster Avenue on Thursday 6th March 10.15am -11.45am and Wednesday 19th March 5.30pm - 7.30pm. You can also contact the service for a hearing check by sending a text message to 0748 3941 539 Heather Abernethy or an email Heather.Abernethy@rnid.org.uk. Bryson Energy was promoting its Belfast Safe Homes Service for over 65s or vulnerable adults. They will provide a free home safety check and also have a range of useful equipment (free) including touch lamps, magnifiers, shoe horns and jar and bottle openers. The contact number for a referral is 0800 1422 865 or email to handyman@brysonenergy.org. The handyman service will carry out small repairs, e.g. installing carbon monoxide smoke alarms and fitting curtain poles. People on benefits pay £5 per hour. The cost if not on benefits is £15 per hour. The staff of health charities Versus Arthritis and mental health charity AWARE were very busy dealing with queries from individuals while the organisations promoting health screening for prostate, testicular, bowel and breast screening cancers were encouraging people to come forward for testing. They emphasised the importance of regular self-checks and not to delay seeking medical advice. Contact details for these organisations are available. A wide range of leaflets and information was provided and some of the staff will return to speak to Parish groups at a later date. The Mind Matters programme is funded by the Benefact Trust through a Church of Ireland initiative. The event included members of Cregagh Crafters which was started with a Mind Matters grant. Thanks to all who helped in the organisation and setting up of the event.



MOTHERS' UNION FESTIVAL SERVICE

The MU Festival Service will take place in Seapatrick Parish Church, Banbridge on Wednesday 2nd April 2025 at 7.30 pm. An Area Coach has been organised and will depart from Knockbreda Church car park at 5.45 pm arriving back to Belfast at approximately 11 pm. The cost is £8 per person and to save collecting cash on the coach, perhaps you would bring payment to our March meeting. This Annual Service is a lovely occasion with the Branch banners being processed and we look forward as always to your loyal support from this Branch. If you would like to go and have not already added your name to the list, please let me know.

Angela Harvey, Branch Secretary

GENERAL MAINTENANCE

The church premises require regular maintenance to keep them in good order, so it is an advantage to have a regular schedule for works both for buildings and grounds. This gives people an opportunity to volunteer a few hours each month to assist in the upkeep of our estate. Accordingly, **the last Saturday of each month is designated as a work morning, duration from 9am to 11am** for anyone who might be available. Work would include general light duties, tidying up in the halls and church and optional pruning, spraying, brushing etc. The next date is **Saturday 29th March.**

See you then!

**Jim Haughey,
Glebewarden**

CREGAGH CRAFTERS

Crafters have been busy. Seventy blankets were delivered to the Ulster Hospital Casualty Department. They were delighted with the blankets and twiddle sleeves. A bag of hats, scarves and sewn toys were sent to Lydia's Gift Charity for children in need. All sorts of crafts take place on a Tuesday morning between 10.30am - 12.30pm. All are welcome to come along. There is always plenty of chat, a warm welcome and a cuppa.

Janet Johnston

07711885203



FLOWER DONATION ROTA

MARCH

2nd Mrs M Corbett
9th Mrs M Carleton
16th Mrs J Logan
23rd Miss C Hamilton
30th Mrs B Wilson



EASTER GENERAL VESTRY



Annual Vestry Meeting

The Easter General Vestry, the Annual Business Meeting of the church will take place on Tuesday 8th April 2025 at 7.30pm. At this meeting, a new Select Vestry will be elected and the Rector and Treasurer will present annual reports. Everyone is welcome to attend.



ST. FINNIAN'S HISTORY PROJECT 1932-2032

To celebrate 100 years of St. Finnian's we would like to collect your stories of the people, events and changes in the parish to publish in future church magazines. Do you have: -

- Photographs from over the years
- Old church magazines
- Any material for display purposes
- Information about church organisations
- Anything else that may be relevant

We are interested in your memories, particularly from older members of the congregation and people who have belonged to the parish since childhood. If you would like to write a paragraph or two of around 250-300 words, you can post this to Linda Campbell at the church office or email your story to **stfinnians100years@outlook.com**

We would be grateful if any contributions could be submitted in Word Document format for ease of editing.

If you are aware of anyone who may need help writing their memories, we would be grateful for any assistance from friends and family. If you would like to become involved in the planning and gathering of material for this project then please email **stfinnians100years@outlook.com** or contact Linda with your name and details.

Thanks to Gillian McGee for providing the third article in this history series, " Growing up in the 1960s" which can be found on the opposite page.

ST. FINNIAN'S HISTORY

GILLIAN MCGEE - GROWING UP IN THE 1960s

I remember Sunday school. Sitting on the hard wooden chairs, legs dangling; slipping my hymn book on the little shelf under the chair; having my name ticked off in the roll book; dropping my threepenny bit into the wicker basket; listening to Bible stories from the Sunday School teachers; taking our chairs out onto the grass on warm sunny days; attendance prizes and receiving a book or token from the Sunday School Superintendents to treasure and, of course, the Sunday School parties. There would be games and lots of fun before the chairs were lined up the length of the hall either side of tables. I don't remember all that we ate but I do remember large wooden trays from the bakery being carried aloft for us to choose a bun. Don't get me wrong, I loved my mum's baking but there was something so exciting about getting to choose a bakery made, ice topped, jam filled sticky bun, I can still smell them to this day.

I remember Sausage Sizzles in Lady Dixon Park. The freedom of running around, rolling down the hills, playing with friends before being called back to sit down on picnic rugs and being given a hot dog, warm and filling. The sun always seemed to shine.

I remember the Brownies. Slipping my Brownie dress over a warm jumper and trousers before carefully folding the large yellow square of material and tying it round my neck to look like an actual tie (no easy feat for those of that era), pinning my silver Brownie badge on and finally placing the beret at just the right angle before heading up to the hall where Brown Owl and Tawny Owl were waiting. Learning new games, singing new songs and of course working for badges which then had to be sewn onto the sleeve of my uniform. Desperately waiting my turn and eventually becoming a Sixer.

The highest honour was being chosen to carry the Brownie pennant into church on days when all the organisations took part in the service. We often paraded into church at that time. I found an entry in the Belfast Telegraph advertising St. Finnian's Remembrance Sunday service on 11th November 1967 with a "Parade of Youth Organisations" and I must have been part of that. The church hall would be packed with all the organisations, Brownies, Guides, BB. I remember the noise, excitement, anticipation. The leaders had a job to keep us all under control. Uniforms carefully washed and pressed the night before, shoes polished to a shine, and berets checked. Flag holders practised so they would move in unison, we were in awe of the precision of the BB. Then suddenly everyone lined up before proudly marching out of the hall, down and along Cregagh Park, up the main driveway and into the church.

I remember a strong connection between the church and primary school. As well as the Minister coming into school to take assemblies and some religious instruction classes, the school would take part in church services. The choir sang and sometimes we would act out a Bible story. The one I remember was Noah's Ark. Some pupils had homemade masks of the animals and came up the aisle two by two; some pupils were narrators; I was the dove sent out to look for dry land and I remember "fluttering" up the aisle in my tutu carrying a branch in my mouth. I think I remember it mostly because Dad had sprayed the branch silver for some reason and it hadn't fully dried!

My memories are not complete, I don't remember the names of my Sunday School teachers, the Superintendents, Brown Owl or Tawny Owl, but I do remember the feeling of belonging, friendship and safety that St. Finnian's gave me as a child.



Hello everyone

I found myself at a film showing of Sonic the Hedgehog 3 recently. I wasn't looking forward to it even though I knew nothing about the lead character. My reasoning was if it was a cartoon it was bound to be childish and if I could have a nap the time would pass, and I would soon emerge into the real world unscathed. Again, I was pleasantly surprised. With dizzying computer graphics, goodies and baddies everywhere, human actors interacting with the cartoon Sonic and his gang and foe it was an enjoyable tale of good versus evil with good triumphing in the end. One of the themes was about the choices we make and the consequences for good or ill and the declaration was that "humanity was a failed experiment" and doom was inevitable until Team Sonic saved the day. This reminded me of the message of Genesis with Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, back at the dawn of time when God initiated a rescue plan for fallen humanity involving Jesus coming to earth, being born, living, dying and rising again and offering salvation to anyone who would ask for it and choosing to live it out daily in their lives. As we come to the season of Lent, surely one of the most important seasons of the church's year, we will have another opportunity to choose to follow the way of the cross. It may not be easy, but it will be worthwhile. We may stumble and fall short, but the daily choice will be to get up, seek God's forgiveness and keep going. **Branch Meeting - Thursday 6th**

March 7.30pm - Treasures in Heaven. Where are we storing up stuff? A Christian approach to clutter and what we hold onto by Gwen Montgomery. Open meeting. All welcome.

Saturday 8th March - Visit to the Livingston Heritage Centre Killinchy Parish Church: guided tour of Killinchy Parish Church and the history of its first Protestant minister and family who then made a new life in North America. Other significant historic events in our island's history will also be examined. Refreshments will be available. Time tbc.

Angela Harvey, Branch Secretary

Mothers' Union Midday Wave of Prayers March 2025

2-4 March: Yei in South Sudan; Luweero in Uganda; On the Lake in Nigeria; Grafton in Australia; Armagh in All Ireland and South Kerala in India

5-7 March: Bujumbura in Burundi; Maseno South in Kenya; Ihiala in Nigeria; Cameroon; Calgary in Canada and Ysabel in Solomon Islands

9-11 March: Awerial in South Sudan; Mityana in Uganda; Uyo & Ajayi Crowther in Nigeria; Rupert's Land in Canada and Patna in India

12-14 March: Port Elizabeth in South Africa; West Ankole in Uganda; Nomadic Mission & Ekiti-Kwara in Nigeria; Worcester in England and the Episcopal Church of the Philippines

16-18 March: Kajo-Keji in South Sudan; Tarime in Tanzania; Dutse & Akoko-Edo in Nigeria and Canterbury in England

19-21 March: Antisiranana in Madagascar; Busoga in Uganda; Yola & Oke-Ogun in Nigeria; Algoma in Canada and Jabalpur in India

23-25 March: Rokon in South Sudan; Kampala in Uganda; Kaduna in Nigeria; Koforidua in Ghana; Brisbane in Australia and Peru

26-28 March: Central Zambia in Zambia; Southern Highlands in Tanzania; Ogbaru & Badagry in Nigeria; Bermuda and Chandigarh in India

30-31st March: Toamasina in Madagascar; Mukono in Uganda; Ikwerre & Ife East in Nigeria; Down & Dromore in All Ireland and Delhi in India

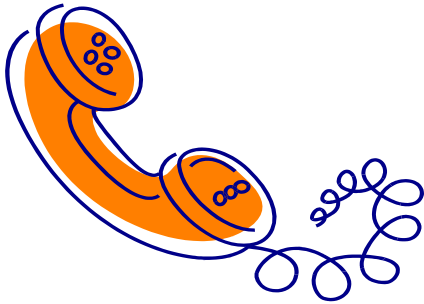


The Importance of Balance

For this month's article I thought it would be useful to revisit a subject that I had mentioned briefly in a previous post, namely 'Balance', or more simply the ability to stay upright whether you are still or moving. This underpins all physical activities we undertake, whether it is getting dressed in the mornings, taking the dog for a walk or even running a marathon. As we age, our ability to balance gradually deteriorates as a result of a decrease in the hair cells in the inner ear and changes to the blood flow. For example, a person under 40 years old should be able to stand on one leg for about 45 seconds whereas a 70 year old should manage about 20-25 seconds. This deterioration is more marked if we don't stay active, and can lead to an increased potential for falls resulting in serious injury or disability. Some studies have even associated not being able to perform simple balance tests with shorter life expectancy. The good news is that it's never too late to make a change and there is evidence to show that doing some form of balance training in later life can reduce the risk of falls and injury. UK guidelines recommend that over 65s should take part in balance activities on at least 2 days per week, alongside exercise to increase muscle strength, flexibility and aerobic fitness. At the start of each Pilates class we do one or two balance exercises that usually involve standing on one leg and, when you do this, your brain is performing a remarkable amount of coordination by integrating signals from the fluid in the inner ears, visual clues from the eyes and feedback from joints and muscles. It becomes even more challenging when you close your eyes, and the trick to improving balance is to make yourself feel wobbly. Every time you practice a one leg stance, it is an opportunity to recalibrate your brain and form new connections and strengthen the coordination between your ears, eyes, joints and muscles. I would advise a degree of caution when undertaking balance exercises for the first time or if you already have a poor sense of balance, and to make sure you have a handy chair, table or wall to help avoid overbalancing and to enable you to build up gradually. So until the next time stay safe and keep moving and, when you're not moving, embrace the wobble! **We meet on Wednesdays at 7pm in the Huston Hall. Everyone is welcome and a small donation of £3 per class is requested to go towards church funds. If you want to find out more about Pilates, please contact me - John Waterworth by phone (+447941368546) or email at jcwworth@yahoo.co.uk**

CONTACT DETAILS

Rector: Tel: 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 **April** magazine to
office.cregagh@down.anglican.org
or telephone the Parish Office
028 90792793 by NOON on
Tuesday 4th March.

Don't forget to check out the
church website:

www.stfinnians.org



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