

ST Finnian's

JANUARY 2026



Dear Friends

I wonder where you sit on the New Year spectrum? Many people like to see in the New Year with family and friends, others prefer to go dancing and hit the town so to speak. Others find it a really difficult evening, a painful reminder of times past when people were present who sadly are no longer with us or it brings up feelings of loneliness and isolation.

It's one of those evening when popular culture suggests we should all be having an amazing time, loving the parties and the busyness and the rushing around. Some years ago I remember reading the autobiography of the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair. He recounted the challenging circumstances of his New Year's Eve in 1999/2000. He confessed in his book that he is not normally someone who makes a big thing of New Year celebrations. Sometimes he stays up if family or friends are around, other times he's happy to go to bed and treat it as any other evening.

When you are in public life and you hold the office of Prime Minister, sometimes these things get decided for you. On New Year's Eve 1999 he was

scheduled to travel on the maiden voyage of a new stretch of rail that had been designed to ease the congestion of London traffic and the Minister for Transport had asked him to come along for the photo opportunity. A big firework display had been organised on the banks of the Thames and he was to light the pyrotechnics before heading into one of the big concert venues like the Royal Albert Hall or the Millennium Dome to mark the dawn of a new Millennium. There was some underlying anxiety about how the new Millennium might affect computer networks so he had various experts working on monitoring all of that. As he headed off on the new section of rail with some journalists and film crews, the train broke down. While the issue was eventually resolved, it was a very embarrassing start to what was supposed to mark a significant achievement for the Department of Transport. On a damp London night, as he attempted to light the fireworks with huge crowds gathered to watch the spectacle, they failed to ignite. He had that humiliating experience of repeatedly striking lighters with

nothing happening until eventually, with some assistance, the fireworks started to go off. It wasn't the rip-roaring spectacle everyone had hoped for but more of a damp squib. When he got inside the concert hall he describes wishing the evening was over and that he could be at home and, as midnight struck, he was in the Royal Box standing beside the late Queen, Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen, who was renowned for her dignity and graciousness, was standing there applauding the music when the band struck up Auld Lang Syne at midnight. In a now viral clip on the internet, the Prime Minister, not known for his rhythm or musical skills, made the impromptu decision to link the late Queen's arm and try to do a little dance. It was a moment that had awkwardness writ large all around it.

The Prime Minister knew he had embarrassed the Queen and yet felt the glare of the world's cameras upon him and made this rash decision to involve the Queen in some New Year's revelry.

When he eventually got to bed around 3am, his wife Cherie

asked him how he had enjoyed the evening. She had seen little snippets on TV and unaware of all the mortification he had endured, suggested the evening had gone rather well!! Sometimes we begin a new year full of good intentions about taking our diet in hand, getting healthier and pursuing some life-long goals. Others are more preoccupied with survival and getting through recovery after surgery or a round of gruelling treatment. Some are glad to say goodbye to the year that is past as it has been so difficult and painful for them. Others are keen to embrace the promise of the year to come. Maybe they are looking forward to starting a new job, getting married or the birth of a child.

Whatever your feelings on the New Year are, be sure to approach it in the knowledge that you will not be alone, that God is keen to travel alongside you whatever the year might bring . Sometimes we have lost sight of that fact, sometimes, because of circumstances, we have tried to distance ourselves from God. What about opening your heart and inviting Him to come in and walk with you into 2026?

In January there are two important things we are keen to do in church life. One is to offer an opportunity for people who are searching for faith, searching for God, to come together to explore that search together. We hope to use a resource produced by the well known theologian and pastor Dr Tim Keller called the Reason for God. Over the course of 5-6 weeks we will have the opportunity to take a look at some of the issues together and it would be suitable for both people who have faith or those who are searching or who want to go deeper. Details of the starting date and time will be published soon once we finalise them but please know you would be really welcome to come along and bring a friend. The second thing we are keen to do is to update our Safeguarding Trust volunteers' register. We are so grateful to all our volunteers who serve as volunteers with ministries to children, young people and vulnerable adults. Recent updates in legislation mean that all our volunteers have to be Access NI checked to assist with our programmes every 3 years. We are conscious that some volunteers have been in

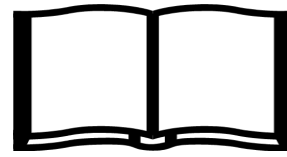
place many years and while historically one check would have been sufficient, now these checks have to be constantly renewed as we continue to offer ongoing training and support to all our volunteers. I completed my own check with the police and Access NI about a month before Christmas to comply with these new regulations. With the help of our Safeguarding Panel, we will be asking all our volunteers to complete this process in January. All our volunteers have been checked and completed these checks in the past but we need to get them updated and we appreciate everyone's patience and attentiveness to the importance of these issues. The Safeguarding Panel and the clergy will be available to help everyone involved to complete the process which involves submitting an application online. May we take this opportunity to wish everyone a peaceful and happy 2026.

With very best wishes.

Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 02890 793822

From the Registers

Christian Burial



27th November - Ivy Robinson

2nd December - Elizabeth Kells

5th December - Robert Crawford

10th December - Dinah Hay

Register of Vestry Members

The Register of Vestry men and women will be updated in January 2026 and reviewed at the Select Vestry meeting on Tuesday 17th February 2026. The individuals recorded in the Register may stand for election to the Select Vestry at the Easter General Vestry and may vote in the election. Anyone wishing to be registered must complete a Form of Declaration by 13th February 2026 so that their name may be added to the Register. Forms are available from the Churchwardens, on the Parish website and from Mrs May Lavery, Secretary to the Select Vestry (secretarystfinnians@outlook.com).

Divine Healing Ministries

After more than 50 years of experience in the ministries of prayer and healing, Bro. David Jardine has published his new book 'Healing Words'. This is a practical book, telling people how to develop their life of prayer and how to both receive and to pray for healing. Bro. David says, 'If you want to grow in your relationship with God, you will find this book very helpful'. I would say, at a cost of £5, the book is exceptionally good value. To order a copy please speak with the Churchwardens, Barbara or myself. **The speaker at the next DHM service at 7.30pm on Tuesday 27th January 2026 will be David 'Packie' Hamilton.**

Norman Sleator

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 the service and also for tea/coffee, scones and friendship afterwards in the Sextons' Room.

Services will resume in the New Year on 7th January.

CHURCH OF IRELAND GAZETTE 2026

The subscriptions for the Church of Ireland Gazette are due for renewal. The cost for 2026 has remained the same as last year - £47.50. If you wish to receive the Gazette next year, please contact Linda in the church office. Contact details can be found on the back of the magazine.

PLEASE ADVISE BY TUESDAY 6TH JANUARY 2026

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

PRAYER MEETINGS BY ZOOM

Our parish prayer meetings by Zoom take place at 7pm on Thursday evenings. If you would like to join us, send an email to zoomtostfinnian@btconnect.com or contact the Rector.

ST. FINNIAN'S TODDLERS

The St. Finnian's Toddlers' Group ended their year with a Christmas party and a visit from Santa and his elves. We are very grateful to them for taking time out of their busy schedule to visit the children.



The Toddlers' Group will be meeting again in the New Year on **Monday 12th January 2026.**

Everyone is very welcome to join us for some fun.



The BB/Anchor Boys return dates are as follows: -

Monday 5th January - Company and Junior Sections return.

Tuesday 6th January - Anchor Boys return.

FLOWER DONATION ROTA

JANUARY

4th Mrs H McKnight
11th Mrs J Cunningham
18th Mr R Hamilton
25th Mrs D Smith





Hello everyone

What will this New Year bring? From economic forecasts and political predictions many of which will perhaps not come true, we wonder what will personally be in store for us. It is good and necessary to make plans but they may need adjusting as we go along. Charlotte Bronte wrote, "I try to avoid looking forward or backward and try to keep looking upward." In Matthew 6:34 Jesus said, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." In all the chance and changes in the year ahead let us trust in Jesus our unchanging rock. Hopefully we can pledge to be a better friend, church member, neighbour, work colleague, brother, sister, parent in the days ahead. A quote wrongly attributed to Socrates but written in a 1907 dissertation summarised the views of the ancient Greek elders about the young, saying they were disrespectful, noisy, self-important, greedy etc. Of course this is a stereotype which just isn't true and so at our January meeting (details below) it will be our pleasure to come along and hear Katie Walker (Liz's granddaughter) as she leads a spiritual reflection on her involvement with others in a mission trip to Moldova during the summer. The morning will also include refreshments and Holy Communion which is a lovely way to start the New Year. It is now my duty to let you know that our Branch Leader of over three years, Liz Walker has decided to stand down. She has served us faithfully and we will miss her enthusiasm and dedication. Liz will continue in her Mothers' Union work at Diocesan level as the Action and Outreach Co-Ordinator. We thank her for her service and wish her all the best. We are also delighted to welcome Heather Leckey who has been appointed by our Rector Jono to be our new Branch Leader. Heather has many years' experience in the Mothers' Union at Diocesan and Branch level and we look forward to supporting her in this important role. Liz, Heather Julie and the rest of the Committee - Karen, Belinda and myself wish you every blessing in the year ahead. Please see opposite page for the Mothers' Union Midday Wave of Prayer for January 2026.

January 3rd 2026 (Saturday) Huston Hall 10:30am Talk by Katie Walker and Holy Communion.

February 7th 2026 (Saturday) Brunch at the Ivanhoe Inn. Time tbc
Angela Harvey Secretary (Mob 07596 075081)



Mothers' Union Midday Wave of Prayer January 2026

1-3 January: All Mothers' Union trustees and staff throughout the world

5-7 January: The Kingdom of Eswatini; Ruaha in Tanzania; Aguata & Lagos Mainland in Nigeria; Norwich in England and Chotanagpur in India

8-10 January: Lesotho; Kibungo in Rwanda; Etche & Ogbomoso in Nigeria; Leeds in England and Hanuato in Solomon Islands

12-14 January: Mauritius; Kericho in Kenya; Katsina in Nigeria; Kumasi in Ghana; Winchester in England and Nandyal in India

15-17 January: Seychelles; Bukedi in Uganda; Enugu in Nigeria; Birmingham in England and Marathwada in India

19-21 January: St Mark the Evangelist in South Africa; Butare in Rwanda; Okigwe-South in Nigeria; Gambia; British Columbia in Canada and Rajasthan in India

22-24 January: Egypt; Gasabo in Rwanda; Otukpo & On the Coast in Nigeria; Bathurst in Australia and Nasik in India

26-28 January: False Bay in South Africa; Shinyanga in Tanzania; Umuahia & Ijebu South West in Nigeria; Bath & Wells in England and Vellore in India

29-31 January: Masvingo in Zimbabwe; Kibondo in Tanzania; Nebbi in Uganda; Bida in Nigeria; Llandaff in Wales and Kanyakumari in India



Hello everyone

At our last Messy Church of 2025, we welcomed a great crowd of Primary aged children from the local schools and nurseries. Ryan's theme was centred around his favourite Christmas carol, Joy to the World and he even managed to get some of the older children to sing it along with him. Once Ryan had finished his talk about the importance of joy in all our lives, we moved into the Huston Hall to work through the various craft activities that had been chosen by our team. We are always very grateful that the parents and carers willingly help those struggling with scissors, glue etc.

Parachute games, always a great success, were followed by chicken goujons, chips and ice-cream to round off the afternoon.

The children went home with their paper bags full of edible snowmen and decorated biscuits as well as lollipop Christmas, handmade cards, hanging angels, selection boxes and a lovely edition of the Polar Express for each child.

We have a small team of helpers who give so generously of their time and effort. We couldn't possibly run these sessions without them. Could we say a big thank you particularly to Liam and Jude, Ryan's two sons, who kept the school age children focussed and helped with cutting etc. Any other adults who would like to come along and help are more than welcome too.

We hope to see you all again at the end of February 2026.

God bless everyone.

The Messy Church Team

JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME (Isaac Watts 1719)

Services for January



Sunday 4th January (The 2nd Sunday of Christmas)

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

Sunday 11th January (The Baptism of our Lord)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am Holy Communion
7.00pm Compline

Sunday 18th January (The 2nd Sunday after the Epiphany)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am Morning Prayer (Youth Group in Coffee Bar)
7.00pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 25th January (The 3rd Sunday after the Epiphany)

9.00am Holy Communion
11.00am Morning Prayer (Youth Group in Coffee Bar)
7.00pm Evening Prayer

CRECHE

During the 11am service there is a creche available for younger children who are not yet old enough for Sunday School. Feel free to bring your children to the Huston Hall before or during the service.

YOUTH GROUP

This month, Youth Group will meet on Sundays 18th and 25th January at 11am in the Coffee Bar.



ST. FINNIAN'S HISTORY PROJECT 1932-2032

Many thanks to everyone who has already submitted such a variety of interesting stories, memories and photographs to the St .Finnian's 100th anniversary history project. We would be most grateful to continue to receive your stories about the people, events and changes in the parish so do please have a think about anything that might be relevant. We would also like to gather information from the last 25 years of all the new initiatives that have been developed in the parish for example, the Ladies Friendship Group, Messy Church, Cregagh Crafters, Pickleball and Pilates. Any contributions can be submitted on a word document. Please contact Linda in the church office by email, phone or post or email stfinnians100years@outlook.com

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 Patricia Stewart for providing the twelfth article in this history series sharing her memories of the Ulster Project.

ST. FINNIAN'S HISTORY

PATRICIA STEWART

THE ULSTER PROJECT

In 1985 and 1986 I was asked to be a leader on the Ulster Project, first to Ohio and then, the next year, to Milwaukee. The ethos of the project was to promote understanding between Catholic and Protestant teenagers in Northern Ireland during the Troubles and offer opportunities to integrate and mix through outreach sessions and fun events in America. The twenty teenagers were chosen from their churches. I will be forever grateful to the lovely American families who raised money all year with various fundraising activities to enable us all to stay and have such a wonderful time during our one month stay.

It is hard to imagine now, but flying to America then, was a huge adventure, few had experienced. Portrush was the usual summer trip!

My first visit was to Massillon in Ohio. The journey was very long, as trans-Atlantic flights all went from Shannon in those days. There were no fancy motorways, so in total, the journey took about twenty- four hours.

I remember arriving with my host family at midnight. They had prepared a lovely feast for me including iced tea (which I had never heard of.) I was very glad of the food, but I was so tired I just wanted to go to bed.

I didn't sleep much as a massive thunderstorm raged all night and apparently some folk were out on tornado watch!

Everyone was very welcoming, and over the next few weeks we were treated like VIPs. The mayor came to meet us.

There were signs in the shops and cafes welcoming 'the teens from N. Ireland' and we even got a slot on local TV and radio.

We were treated to amazing activities; swim parties, skating and bowling; Wiener Roasts (huge outdoor community barbeques); rodeos; trips to rollercoaster parks and of course 4th July celebrations.



Patricia - 1st on left.

We attended churches, camps and talks and were given warm fuzzies (warm, welcoming hugs.) Most of my charges settled in well.

I only had one case of severe homesickness. (Remember there were no mobile phones or computers, and the teenagers were only supposed to ring home once a fortnight!) Very expensive! Thankfully, the unhappy girl persevered and by the end of the four weeks, she cried because she didn't want to go home at all. I had one trip to the hospital with one teenager getting sun burn. Her pale face looked like one large blister.



Patricia - front row - 3rd from left.

The teenagers mixed well, made real friendships and absorbed their new experiences. We learnt to eat Sloppy Joes, corn dogs and frozen custard. We put windows up, not down, on a hot day, as cars had air conditioning! Imagine! I learnt to shuck corn and was told not to put my hands too deep in the sink as it had a fancy munching machine to eat the rubbish. Decking was new and my family were very proud of dad's DIY work. Houses were very large and some even had swimming pools.

The teenagers wrote about their experiences and sent each other notes about their feelings and experiences of the Ulster Project. They met together when they got home and kept in touch with their host families.

This year the Ulster Project is fifty years old. Although the decades have passed since I was a leader, I will never forget the wonderful learning experiences I had and the opportunity afforded to me.

Thank you to all involved.

Patricia Stewart

Church Giving

The Free Will Offering (FWO) envelopes for 2026 are available for collection. If you haven't already picked up your envelopes, please collect them at the back of the church. Like other churches, St. Finnian's depends on the generosity of parishioners for all our general income. Without this, we could not continue as a local place of worship, witness, support and fellowship. At the beginning of a New Year, we would like to thank all who support the work of the Parish by their regular giving by envelope or Standing Order. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Parish Website

A '**Giving**' page has recently been added to the Parish website. It provides information on how to financially support the work of the Parish. You can find the 'tab' for this page at the top of the home page of the St. Finnian's Parish website (www.stfinnians.org); the tab description is '**Giving**'.

The 'Giving' page provides information on:

- The Parish bank account, to enable direct payments to the Parish
- Cheque donations
- Setting up a Standing Order
- Requesting Free Will Offering (FWO) envelopes
- Gift Aid
- Details on how to contact the Parish Treasurer

A new **online giving portal** has also been created within the new '**Giving**' page, which enables donors to make credit & debit card donations directly to the Parish.

We trust this page will be helpful.

Please feel free to contact the Parish Treasurer if you have any questions or need additional information.

Brian Lavery, Hon. Treasurer

Email: stfinniantreasurer@btinternet.com

LADIES' FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Hello Ladies

Happy New Year to you all. Our new season begins with two very different but equally absorbing talks. We open on Wednesday 14th January at 2.00pm when our Rector, Jono Pierce, will be our speaker. Aptly, his talk will centre around thoughts and reflections for the year ahead. On 28th January, we welcome Sharon McIlveen who has a property at Downhill on the spectacular North Coast. She was the host of the very popular BBC programme, B&B By The Sea. We are a very sociable group, meeting twice a month, with different speakers and activities followed by tea and a chat. We're open to all ladies and are glad to welcome new friends.

Julie Cunningham (Tel: 07814928398)

CREGAGH CRAFTERS

The Crafters will restart on Tuesday 6th January. We meet from 10.30am - 12.30pm in the Huston Hall. Everyone is very welcome to bring along their craft.

Janet Johnston (07711885203)

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 31st January.**

See you then!

Jim Haughey, Glebewarden



Pilates and Shoulder Problems

Welcome to 2026 and hopefully a happy and healthy New Year for all. Having made this wish, I think it's fair to say that modern life seems to tie us up in knots and unfortunately we seem to hold most of our tension around the neck and shoulders. I know that every now and then I find my shoulders creeping up closer towards my ears and I'm sure I'm not the only one this happens to. We all tend to hold tension in our shoulders, whether it's sitting for hours hunched over a desk at work or looking after young children. We can all too easily find the muscles of the chest round the front of the shoulders (the pectoral muscles) becoming increasingly tight. If you can imagine elastic bands attached diagonally from the shoulders and ribs to the waist, it's not hard to see how tightening and shortening these can pull everything forward and lead to poor alignment, rounded shoulders and the head poking forward. While all these muscles grow more tense, the muscles of the mid-back are held overstretched and lengthened and the deep neck flexors become weak. The nature of the shoulder joint itself, a very shallow ball and socket joint to allow for a wide range of movement and stabilised by the muscles around it, means that any imbalance in these muscles can lead to impingement of the joint with the bones lined up incorrectly at the socket. One way of assessing your posture is to stand in front of a mirror and let your arms hang by your sides - the natural alignment should be with the arms down the seams of the trousers and with the palms flat against the outside of the legs, whereas you may find the arms slightly forward and the palms turned inwards to face back. In order to correct this common problem, it will be necessary to change the way we use the upper body's muscles and address the tension from the superficial neck muscles. A starting point is to use exercises such as shoulder drops, neck rolls, arm openings and the dumb waiter to release the tension from the area. Having done that the next stage will be to strengthen the mid-back muscles that hold the shoulder blades down the back using exercises such as the diamond press and the dart. With many of these exercises you may hear instructions to keep the upper body open with shoulder blades sliding down into your back pockets and with the breastbone soft and the neck released. Integrating these into your regular programme of Pilates exercises will help to develop and maintain good shoulder mechanics and prevent problems arising. However, as with any corrective exercise programme you should consult with a specialist practitioner first if you have been diagnosed with problems requiring medical intervention but most of the exercises mentioned should be suitable. I trust that you have found this article both informative and useful and, until the next time, take care and keep moving. **We meet on Wednesdays at 7pm in the Huston Hall.**

Everyone is welcome and a small donation of £3 per class is requested for 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

Dear Friends

We want to send out a huge word of thanks to everyone who helped with St. Finnian's Shoe Box Appeal this year. Some chose to fill a shoe box in person and others opted to fill their box online. We also received the generous sum of £200 in cash donations from folk within our church family who wanted to be part of this gifting to marginalised children this Christmas time.

A warm word of thanks to Janet and the Cregagh Crafting group for their continued dedication in supporting this worthy cause also. They provided lovely handmade kit bags, knitted toys, beautiful scarves and an abundance of 'extras' that padded out our boxes so generously.

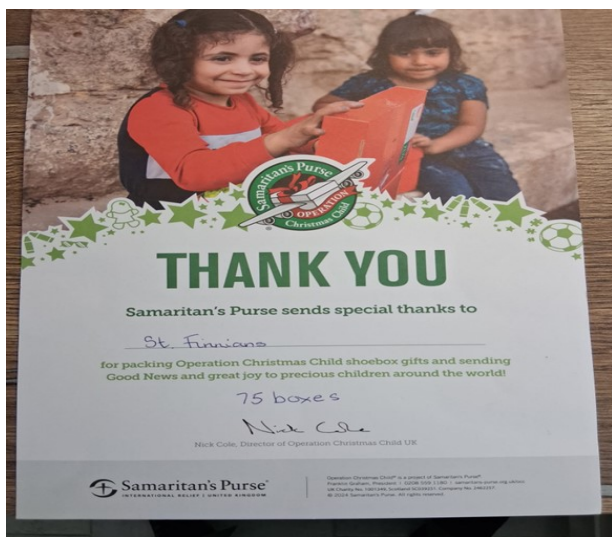
We sent off 75 shoe boxes that were literally filled to overflowing with practical items such as clothing, pyjamas, scarves and gloves, as well as toys, books, pens, pencils and fun, fidget toys and games. So far we know that the boxes are en route to children living in Eastern Europe and the Middle East but to date our final destination has not been confirmed; we will keep you posted.

As we step into another New Year may we walk on in the love and hope given to us through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we be changed to be like Him a little more with each passing day.

We love because He first loved us 1 John 4:19.

Love and thanks.

Mark & Charmaine Robinson

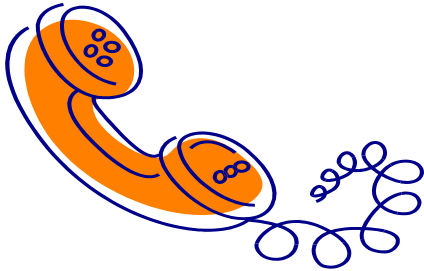


CONTACT DETAILS

Rector: Tel: 028 90793822

Curate: Tel: 07594890019

Email:ryan.stfinnianscregagh@gmail.com



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 **February** magazine to **office.cregagh@down.anglican.org** or telephone the Parish Office 028 90792793 by NOON on **Tuesday 6th January.**

Don't forget to check out the church website:

www.stfinnians.org



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