

ST Finnian's

FEBRUARY 2026



*An invitation to go deeper
during the season of Lent
through our
Hope Explored course
and midweek Lenten services.
(see inside for details)*

Dear Friends

With Easter falling early this year our thoughts are turning to the season of Lent which begins in February. Rather like January, when people start the year with noble aspirations and resolutions about self- improvement, a healthier diet, exercise, perhaps learning a new skill or mastering a new language, the season of Lent often affords us opportunities to start afresh or go deeper in our spiritual lives.

Sometimes I like to plan to read a book or two in manageable chunks each day that I think will benefit my spiritual life or help me to grow in my understanding of God. Sometimes I try to listen to some talks or podcasts that, again, I feel will help me in my devotional life. Life for all of us is busy and sometimes our spiritual life becomes the first casualty of our busyness. We decide to miss church once or twice and suddenly it's a month since we have been. We are in a busy season at work and we stop making the time to read our Bibles daily or to pray. We tell ourselves God won't mind and that He will understand and when we return to our readings we discover we don't have the same hunger or appetite for it

any more and it can begin to slip off our radar altogether.

In St. Finnian's we try to offer some prompts to help people to do something meaningful or tangible for their spiritual life in the context of church. This year we are focussing our thoughts on the topic of discipleship and what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the world today.

On the 6 Thursdays of Lent, our Curate, Reverend Dr. Ryan Hawk will be guiding us through passages in Matthew 5-7 through the lens of the German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who died during World War 2.

The proposed outline for these 6 weeks are : -

Week 1: The cost of discipleship - cheap grace v costly grace.

Week 2: Community – Christian community means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.

Week 3: The day together - the responsibility of the gathered body.

Week 4: The day alone - the responsibility of the individual disciple.

Week 5: Servanthood and mission.

Week 6: Confession and Communion.

Each of these services, which will last 30-35 minutes, will be on Thursday nights in church beginning on 19th February at 7.30pm. We hope that you will be able to join us. During Holy Week we are hoping to invite a series of speakers who will share what discipleship looks like in their daily lives and context. At the end of January we are looking forward to a 3-week series exploring the subject of hope. It's called Hope Explored and will run on Wednesday evenings at 7.30pm in the coffee bar. The 3 sessions will focus on Hope, Peace and Purpose. We have always found a great joy in coming together for groups like this which offer a safe space for people to share ideas and experiences and enjoy fellowship together. Sometimes little bursts of spiritual activity like this allow things to touch us and grip our souls and lead us into a deeper faith and understanding of all that God has done for us. They also offer a great way in for those who are curious, so if you have friends, neighbours or family members who are always asking you questions about faith and church, it's a great thing to invite them to come

along and have a think about these questions. Our prayer is that however you choose to observe this 40-day period, God will be at work in your life and that you will grow closer to Him and that He will shape your character and your life more and more, so that collectively we become more like Jesus.

**With very best wishes.
Jonathan Pierce (Rector)
Telephone 02890 793822**

PRAYER MEETINGS BY ZOOM

This month, prayer meetings by Zoom will only take place on Thursdays 5th and 12th February (7pm) due to Lent. If you would like to join us, email zoomtostfinnian@btconnect.com or contact the Rector.

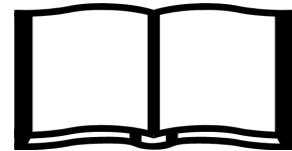
PRAYER WARRIOR

Do you have a concern or problem and would like someone to pray for you? If so, 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**

From the Registers

Christian Burial



30th December - George Nicholl

20th January - Stephen Whiteside

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).

CREGAGH CRAFTERS

Cregagh Crafters will be meeting as usual in February on Tuesdays from 10.30am - 12.30pm in the Huston Hall. Crafting, a cuppa and chat all add up to a fun morning!

Janet Johnston (07711885203)

BB/ANCHOR BOYS

The BB/Anchor Boys will be taking a break on: -

Monday 9th February - Company and Junior Sections.

Tuesday 10th February - Anchor Boys.

We will meet as usual the following week.

ST. FINNIAN'S TODDLERS

Toddlers will not be meeting on Monday 9th February due to the mid-term break. We will resume as normal the following week on Monday 16th February.

Hope Explored Course

Over 3 weeks from the end of January to mid-February on Wednesday evenings, we hope to look in some depth at the topic of hope through Mark's Gospel and some video and discussion materials. **The course starts on Wednesday 28th January at 7.30pm in the coffee bar.**

Week one is thinking about how Hope is such a powerful thing. Its not a vague optimism but something much greater than that. It's a joyful confidence and expectation for a future that is worth waiting for.

Week two is about Peace. While the absence of peace is so painful, the presence of peace is something truly beautiful bringing wholeness and completeness to our lives. It often comes despite the challenges of our circumstances.

Week three is about Purpose. All of us hope that our lives have meaning and we want to make a difference. Having a purpose gets us out of bed in the morning and gets us through the tough times.



Hello everyone

A little reminder that Messy Church will be back again at 3.30 pm on Friday 27th February. Our wonderful friends at Crown Jesus Ministries are going to be with us that day for a puppet show. We are excited for another afternoon of games, fun, dance and faith. All children of nursery and primary school age are very welcome. So please, come along and bring a friend or two. As usual, there will be snacks beforehand with tea/coffee and biscuits for the grown-ups. The day will finish with a light supper of chips, goujons and ice-cream - yummy. We cannot wait to see you there and to share the love and good news of Jesus.

God bless.

The Messy Church Team

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.



Advance good news, the local World Day of Prayer annual service will be held here in St. Finnian's on Friday 6th March at 8.00pm. EVERYONE is invited to this service prepared by the Christian women of Nigeria. Written in response to the theme, "I will give you rest, come", (Matthew 11: 28-30), the service shares the stories of four Nigerian women who inspire us to work towards a world without injustice, marginalisation, religious persecution, poverty and despair. The service will be led by ladies from the churches in this area. We hope to welcome you as we join in a great wave of prayer encircling the globe, all praying for the people of Nigeria.

**Julie Cunningham
Secretary WDP, Belfast East1**

FLOWER DONATION ROTA

FEBRUARY

1st Mrs N Moncrieff
8th Miss A Harvey
15th
22nd Mrs M Saunders





Hello everyone

At the time of writing, I am sorry to report our January meeting had to be cancelled due to the icy conditions. Hopefully Katie and Emily may be able to fit in their talk sometime but if not, we wish them all the best in their forthcoming revision for the very important A-Level exams.

As we journey through the winter months and the cold short days and dark nights, it is good to have a warm home to shelter in. If you live on your own or as a couple, it is good to meet others for companionship as a few friends or in a group and no better way to do this as to get together for a meal. Christmas is not too long behind us and hopefully you can remember enjoying being with friends and family over Christmas lunch. At other times ordinarily there is something disarming about sitting around the table with good food and conversations. Even if you don't know everyone well you quickly get over any awkwardness as we eat and chat. Someone told me recently that they were taught to lay an extra place at the table in case an unexpected visitor came at short notice. In the Bible there are plenty of examples of hospitality e.g. Abraham welcomed three strangers by having food prepared and offered. The Jewish Festivals in the Old Testament reminded the people of God's provision physically and spiritually, most of them involving food, Firstfruits, Passover, etc pointing forward to God's ultimate provision of Jesus for all our needs. In the Gospels also are many instances of Jesus and his disciples sharing food in the ordinary sense of relaxing over a meal or feeding a crowd as well as the depth of meaning in the Holy Communion, which we would have been mindful of as we would have taken part in that service in the Huston Hall on January 3rd past. So by sharing of food and conversation, I'm looking forward to conversations and being together at our Brunch in the Ivanhoe on Saturday 7th February at 10.30am. Lifts can be arranged by contacting me or Heather.

Branch Meeting Thursday 5th March 2026 - jewellery valuation 7:30pm.

At this meeting we intend to mark Heather Leckey's commencement of taking over the Branch Leader role and to mark Liz Walker's faithful service as Branch Leader over the last four years.

**Angela Harvey Branch Secretary mob 07596 075081
Heather Leckey Branch Leader Mob 07833 905017**



Mothers' Union Midday Wave of Prayer February 2026

2-4 February: Matlosane in South Africa; Mumias in Kenya; Eha-Amufu in Nigeria; Ballarat in Australia; Niagara in Canada and North Kerala in India

5-7 February: Botswana; Marsabit in Kenya; Idah & Jebba in Nigeria; Salisbury in England and Andaman & Car Nicobar Islands in India

9-11 February: Lainya in South Sudan; Ankole in Uganda; Abuja & Lagos-West in Nigeria; Lichfield in England and Karnataka North in India

12-14 February: Matana in Burundi; South Ankole in Uganda; Morogoro in Tanzania; Ohaji/Egbema in Nigeria; New Westminster in Canada and Dornakal in India

16-18 February: Bentiu in South Sudan; Bunyoro Kitara in Uganda; Okigwe-North & Omu-Aran in Nigeria; Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh in All Ireland and Krishna-Godavari in India

19-21 February: Free State in South Africa; Bondo in Kenya; Ogbia & Offa in Nigeria; Swansea & Brecon in Wales; Argentina and Uruguay

23-25 February: Wau in South Sudan; Kigeme in Rwanda; Bauchi in Nigeria; St David's in Wales and Mandalay in Myanmar

26-28 February: Mundri in South Sudan; Madi & West Nile in Uganda; Isikwuatu in Nigeria; Chichester in England and Seoul in South Korea

LADIES' FRIENDSHIP GROUP

Hello Ladies

February's first meeting will be on Wednesday 11th at 2.00pm when we welcome the return of Jim Bailie. You may remember the fun afternoon we spent decorating table coasters last February. We'll be crafting and bringing out our creative skills again. A more serious afternoon is planned for 25th February when a representative from Flourish will open our eyes to the extent of human trafficking in Northern Ireland. Flourish aims to give a brighter future to everyone affected by human trafficking and provide support to overcome trauma and rebuild lives. As I write this, the ground is covered in a sprinkling of snow. Hopefully, February's weather will be more conducive to getting out and enjoying each other's company.

Julie Cunningham (Tel: 07814928398)

Divine Healing Ministries' Service

The next Divine Healing Ministries' service will be held on Tuesday 24th February at 7.30pm when the speaker will be Fergus McMorrow, Director of DHM.

Norman Sleator

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 28th February**. See you then!

Jim Haughey, Glebewarden

Services for February



Sunday 1st February (The 4th Sunday after the Epiphany)

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

Sunday 8th February (The 2nd Sunday before Lent)

- | | |
|---------|----------------|
| 9.00am | Holy Communion |
| 11.00am | Holy Communion |
| 7.00pm | Compline |

Sunday 15th February (The Sunday before Lent)

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

Sunday 22nd February (The 1st Sunday in Lent)

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 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 15th and 22nd February 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 Linda Leonard for providing the thirteenth article in this history series about the La Mon atrocity which took place 48 years ago this month. A month after the bombing, a Memorial Service was held by Castlereagh Borough Council in St. Finnian's.

ST. FINNIAN'S HISTORY

LINDA LEONARD

THE LA MON HOUSE BOMBING

On Sunday 26th February 1978, Castlereagh Borough Council held a special Memorial Service at St. Finnian's to remember all those who had died in the La Mon House bomb, those who had been injured and the support given by the Emergency Services and local community at that time.

On the night of 17th February 1978, the guests at La Mon included members of the Irish Collie Club who were holding their annual dinner. An incendiary bomb was attached to the wire grille on the window of the room where the dinner was being held. When it exploded, a fire ball engulfed the room killing 12 members and guests and seriously injuring 23 others. Following the atrocity, a painting was commissioned as a memorial and limited edition copies were distributed to agencies which had provided support. The copy given to St. Finnian's hangs in the hallway in the Huston Hall. The picture depicts two central figures united in grief and includes the badge of the Irish Collie Club. The 12 people who died are represented by peacock feathers. The badges of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, NI Fire Service and NI Ambulance Service are also included.



The La Mon bomb was one of the worst atrocities of the N. Ireland conflict and had a major impact on the whole community.

Those who died were: Sarah Wilson Cooper, Gordon and Joan Crothers, Christine Lockhart, Ian and Elizabeth McCracken, Daniel Magill, Carol Mills, Sandra Morris, Thomas Neeson, Dorothy and Paul Nelson.

Following the incident, Christine's husband Terry, who had not been at the dinner, established a charity called Christine's Children in Mindanao in the Philippines. For over 25 years he ran a children's village providing support to local orphans by giving them hope and new opportunities.

Many local churches and communities in N. Ireland supported the work of the charity and helped fund its work. Over 200 young people who had been living on the streets were provided with a home and education and learnt skills to help them live independently when they reached their mid teens. A film of Terry's work with Christine's Children won a Royal Television Society Award in 2003.

Of his work in the Philippines Terry said "I'm here because God brought me here...I look after the children's practical needs and I have a local Filipino pastor who comes in to look after their spiritual needs."

Christine and Terry had no children of their own. With his second wife Sheila he adopted a girl whom they called Christine. Their son Dylan was born on 17th February 1988 at 9pm at exactly the same time and on the same day 10 years after the La Mon bomb had gone off.

In his final years, Terry had Alzheimer's disease. He died in 2016.

CAP Christmas Gifts' Appeal

A huge THANK YOU to you generous folk at St. Finnian's who contributed to our CAP Christmas appeal for gifts and gift cards for our CAP clients. I was overwhelmed by the quantity and quality of the toiletry sets collected which went a long way to make Christmas affordable for the many families we are presently working with throughout the year. There was enough for each person to have a wrapped Christmas gift and gift card, easing the financial pressures Christmas inevitably brings and is an expression of ours and your care for them and God's unconditional love for them. One client wanted his gratitude recorded and passed on to you: "Thanks to you and the other wonderful people at CAP who are so kind and thoughtful. I am so lucky to know such kind and thoughtful people as yourselves." (B)

Gal 6v10 is a good reminder at the beginning of this year, "Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone - especially to those in the family of faith." I pray that God would continue to open up opportunities for you to bless others with what God has given you, that He may be honoured and that you leave room in your life for Him to continue to bless you. We will continue to do our part in easing financial burdens and poverty in partnership with you and your church. Your support makes such a difference.

Thank you.

James Myles, CAP Debt Centre Manager



Relaxation and Pilates

Last month I addressed the issue of tension around the neck and shoulders and suggested a few techniques to reduce that and to improve posture. This month I'd like to talk more generally about the role and the importance of relaxation in the practice of Pilates.

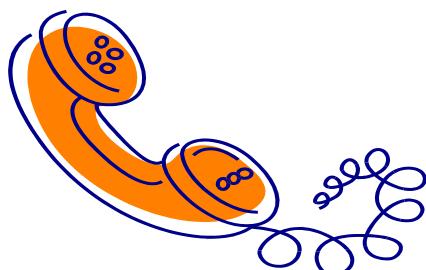
Relaxation is the starting point for everyone when they begin to learn Pilates, and while this may seem strange when talking about an exercise routine, the first priority is to ensure that none of the stress of the day is brought into a session so that you can recognise and release any areas of tension and work the muscles correctly. The relaxation position is a good way to start mat exercises in the supine (lying) position and the following is a brief description. Simply lie on the mat with the neck released and lengthened, using a small pillow if necessary and bend your knees to draw the feet in and place them in line with the hips. Next you should allow the body to soften and imagine it slowly melting into the mat. From this you can begin to engage the core muscles and bring the spine into a neutral shape ready to perform the exercises. This relaxation position is returned to many times in between exercises. It's just as important to relax and release any tension at the end of the Pilates session and for that reason the last couple of exercises are usually geared towards stretching and releasing muscles, before a period of guided relaxation with the lights dimmed. The latter is often referred to as progressive muscle relaxation and is a technique that also uses deep, or exaggerated, diaphragmatic breathing to calm the mind and allow a systematic release of tension from top to toe. This breathing is one method of stimulating the vagus nerve, the body's longest nerve, which passes through the opening of the diaphragm and acts as a crucial communication highway from the brain stem to major organs. It also controls involuntary functions such as heart rate, digestion and mood, and plays a key role in the 'rest and digest' parasympathetic nervous system to promote calm and balance. By stimulating and increasing the 'tone' of the vagus nerve, we can increase our ability to self soothe and relax properly. Joseph Pilates placed great emphasis on breathing techniques and the more I've studied this, the more I've come to appreciate how important it is to build breath led relaxation into each session. Thankfully this is something you can do at home but I'd love you to do it after a Pilates session too. Until the next time, stay safe 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**

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

Please send articles for inclusion in the **March** magazine to office.cregagh@down.anglican.org or telephone the Parish Office 028 90792793 by NOON on **Tuesday 3rd February**.

Don't forget to check out the church website:

www.stfinnians.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.

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