CHURCH MATTERS

The monthly newsletter of the Church of Ireland United Parish of Whitehead & Islandmagee.

Here everyone matters

DECEMBER 24 - JANUARY 25



Oh Holy Night

December 2024/January 2025 Services and Readings

The season of Advent is the beginning of the Church's Liturgical year.
All Sunday and weekday readings are from Year C of the Table of Readings, beginning on page 27 of the Book of Common Prayer 2004.

Sunday 1st December - Advent Sunday
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Holy Communion Two
Epistle Reading - 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Gospel Reading - Luke 21:25-36
Readers for Epistle - Bobby Heron / Alan Hayward
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 42:18 - 45:13; Psalms 1-10; Revelation 19 - 22

Sunday 8th December - Advent 2
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. Messy Churchin the Parochial Hall
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Morning Prayer Two
Sunday Readings - Malachi 3:1-4; Psalm - Canticle Benedictus; Luke 3:1-6
Reader for first Lesson - Scottie Hayes / Sara Henderson
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 45:14 - 49:13; Psalms 11-20; 1 Thessalonians 1-4

Sunday 15th December - Advent 3
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
11:00 a.m. Holy Baptism - United Service in St Patrick's
Sunday Readings - Mark 10:13-16
Reader for the First Lesson Frances Taylor
7:00 p.m. Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance **f**or loved ones
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 49:14 - 52:12; Psalms 21-30; 1 Thessalonians 5, 2 Thessalonians 1-3, Jude

Sunday 22nd December - Advent 4
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Congregational Nativity Service
Reader - The Rector
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 52:13 - 54:17; Psalms 31-33; 2 Peter 1 - 2

Tuesday 24th December - Christmas Eve
6:00 p.m. Christingle service in the Parochial Hall
9:00 p.m. Holy Communion One in St John's, Islandmagee
11:15 p.m. Holy Communion One in St Patrick's, Whitehead
Epistle Reading - Hebrews 1: 1-4; Gospel Reading - John 1:1-14
Epistle Readers Stephen Martin/ Ann Thompson

Wednesday 25th December - CHRISTMAS DAY
9:00 a.m. Family Service and Holy Communion in St. Patrick's
11:00 a.m. Family Service and Holy Communion in St. John's
Epistle Reading - Titus 2:11-14; Gospel Reading - Luke 2:1-14
Reader for the Epistle - The Rector
Weekday Readings:Isaiah 12-25; Psalms 33 - 40; Matthew 2, Luke 2

Sunday 29th December - Christmas 1
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
11:00 a.m. A United Service of Music, Readings and Meditations for the season of Christmastide with our Choir in **St John's**
Readings and Meditations about the Christmas story
Weekday Readings: - Isaiah 59 - 61; Psalms 41-50; John 1:1 - 2:12

JANUARY 2024

Sunday 5th January - Christmas 2
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Holy Communion Two
Epistle Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14; Gospel Reading: John 1:10-18
Reader for first Lesson - Alison Higginson / Maureen Reid
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 62 - 66: Psalms 51 - 60; 1 John 1 - 5, 2 John

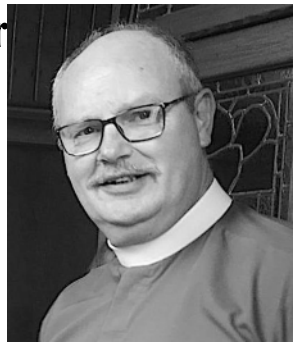
Sunday 12th January - Epiphany 1
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. MESSY CHURCH
10:30 a.m.& 12 noon Morning Prayer Two
Sunday Readings: Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 29: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22
Reader for first Lesson - Jane Robinson / Alan Hayward
Weekday Readings: Amos 1 - 5; Psalms 61 - 70; 1 Corinthians 1 - 5

Sunday 19th January - Epiphany 2
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m.& 12 noon Morning Prayer Two
Sunday Readings; Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; John 2:1-11
Reader for first Lesson - Judith de Fleury / Sara Henderson
Weekday Readings: Amos 6 - 9, Hosea 1:1 - 2:17; Psalms 71 - 80;
1 Corinthians 6:1- 9:14

Sunday 26th January - Epiphany 3
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Family Service
Sunday Reading: Luke 4:14-21
Reader for first Lesson - The Rector
Weekday Readings:Hosea 2:18 - 7:16; Psalms 81 - 90; 1 Corinthisns 9:15 - 12:11

Sunday 2nd February - Presentation of Christ in the Temple
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Holy Communion Two
Sunday Readings - Epistle - Hebrews 2:14-18; Gospel - Luke 2:22-40
Reader for the Epistle - Colin de Fleury / Joy Kerr

A Christmas message from our Rector



Over the years our focus on the birth of Christ has changed. I am old enough to remember, and my father was conservative enough to practice this, that we decorated for Christmas on Christmas Eve and the decorations stayed up until Epiphany. Most of the decorations were paper and there were paper chains hung across the room. It was a much simpler time - and cost a lot less.

The strangest thing is that as our society has become more secular and Christmas has become less about a celebration of Jesus birth. Strange to say that each year it seems that he "celebration" has become more the realm of those who do not attend Church. The displays of Christmas lights seem to be getting bigger every year and are put up and turned on earlier every year.

I would love to start a campaign, "Christmas for the Christians!" But that would be so far removed from the reason why Jesus was born. We are reminded, by Jesus himself in John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him

shall not perish but have eternal life." The issue is that we, as Christians, should be sharing the real meaning of Christmas with others. We should be inviting people to come and share in our celebration of Christmas. To be saying to those who, we may feel, have Christmas decorations up very early; "Isn't Christmas great? We would love you to come and share it with us in St Patrick's or St John's. Here are our services, you will be most welcome. Invite people to the Nativity services on 22nd and to the Christingle service on the 24th. Let people know that for us Christmas is all about Jesus, about God's love for us, God's promise of salvation for ALL people, for the whole world.

Christmas is for Christians, it is for Christians to share with every body. So lets share our joy of Christmas, our hope for salvation and all that Jesus means to us. Let us share it with all the people that we love and all the people that we know, and then share it with people that we may meet as we go about our daily lives.

Every blessing to you and to all of yours for Christmas and the new year from all at the Rectory.



Looking for a way to get your kids into the Bible every day?

Life can be a roller-coaster, but the Bible offers advice through every twist and turn. At United Christian Broadcasters, we're dedicated to sharing God's Word, which is why we created UCB Spark - a video-based devotional app for kids aged 10 to 12. Featuring everything from spoof wildlife documentaries, virtual boxing matches, and lightning-speed special effects, each daily devotional engages kids and helps them connect with the Bible.

DOWNLOAD ON THE App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

OneHope

One Hope helps children engage with God's Story. Together with churches and ministries, we present the Gospel message to children and youth in a way they can understand. This life-changing Scripture message delivers purpose and hope to kids.
You can download the app FREE from Apple App store or Goggle Play

Think Global This Christmas

Christmas - a season of celebration, a time for friends and family, for generous giving. Could you embrace 'an extra guest' this Christmas?

By pausing to remember, and pray for, our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world.

By supporting CMSI's Mission Resource Fund with a one-off gift, to help ensure we can continue to equip the Church in mission.

Here's how it works...

1. Consider what it would cost to have an extra guest this Christmas - someone joining you at your Christmas Day meal.
2. Donate that amount to CMSI as a one-off gift to our Christmas Appeal.
3. We will send you an Extra Guest placemat and a Christmas Prayer Menu - to help you think globally during your Christmas celebrations.

You can use this link - **https://www.cmsireland.org/extra-guest -** on the internet, or scan the QR code here and make a difference in Jesus name.

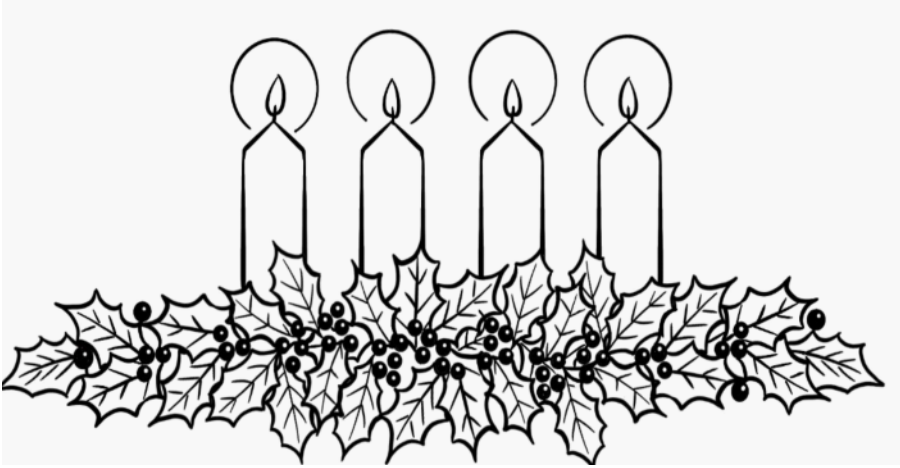
Prayers for Advent

First week
A prayer for strength of will to welcome Christ, and to be ready to receive him when he comes

Second week
A prayer for open hearts to welcome Christ, and to share his wisdom and become one with him

Third week
A prayer for joy in the gift of Christ, and to celebrate his birth with love and thanksgiving

Fourth week
A prayer to open minds to receive the Spirit who prepares us for Christ's coming





The story is told of a farmer who didn't believe in Jesus. One snowy Christmas Eve, his wife was taking their children to a service at their local church. He refused to come saying: *'Why would God lower Himself to come to Earth as a man? That's ridiculous!'* So, they left him at home.

During the evening the winds grew stronger, and the snow turned to a blizzard. He heard a series of loud thumps on the window. In the field near his house he saw a flock of wild geese. They had been migrating south when they got caught in the snowstorm. They were lost and stranded on his farm, with no food or shelter.

The man wanted to help the geese and so he opened the doors of the barn, hoping they would go inside for shelter. But the geese didn't do anything, despite the man's efforts to move them. He made a breadcrumb trail leading to the barn and tried to shoo them toward the barn, but they only got more scared and scattered.

Nothing he did could get them to go into the barn: *'Why don't they follow me?!'* Then he realised: *'If only I were a goose and become one of them, then I could save them.'* Finally, he understood the heart of the Christmas message. God has become one of us in Jesus. The eternal creator God has entered time and space as a baby, to show us who God is and how we can know Him.

This Christmas, let's celebrate again this amazing truth that we have a God who knows and can meet our needs in Jesus. *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means 'God with us''.* Matthew 1:23.

Prayer for December 2024



Father, the days are short; darkness deepens in December and this year it seems to reflect the darkness in so many parts of the world.

We think especially of the land You came to, all those years ago, and other nearby lands where so many are suffering.

Father, thank you that Jesus came into the world as Your Light; that He shines today as brightly and powerfully as He did then, and will do forever.

Help us to open our hearts and minds to allow His light to fill us with the assurance that, no matter what is going on, we are safe in Him.

Thank you that, in Jesus, You have conquered death and darkness; that one day, everyone will bow before Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom shall never end.

Help us, in thankfulness and love, to share Your Christmas Light and Hope and Joy. Hallelujah! In Jesus' name. Amen.

By Daphne Kitching


A Very Special Baby
JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.
BETHLEHEM
AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE A VERY SPECIAL BABY.
...YOU MUST CALL YOUR BABY JESUS
ROMAN CENSUS
GO TO YOUR HOME TOWN TO BE COUNTED
MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE FOR THE CENSUS.
BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL
SORRY... I'VE NO ROOM!
THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...
...WHICH IS WHERE JESUS WAS BORN.
SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY
AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAD BEEN BORN.
WISE MEN CAME FROM THE EAST. THEY TOO WANTED TO SEE JESUS. THEY HAD BEEN GUIDED BY A STAR.
THEY BROUGHT GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.
BUT MARY, JOSEPH AND BABY JESUS SOON HAD TO ESCAPE TO EGYPT...
...AS KING HEROD WANTED JESUS DEAD!!

The Star That Saved Christmas

by Craig Johnson

Every gift under their tree had been ransacked. Could I find the thief before Christmas morning? I'm a crime-scene investigator for Los Angeles County and it's a 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year job. Even on Christmas Eve. I went to bed that night hoping to sleep until morning, when my three daughters would rush in, giddy and impatient to open their gifts. But at midnight the phone rang. "We need you at a crime scene," the dispatcher said.

There had been a home burglary in a poor area of the city. "It can't wait until the morning," the deputy at the scene told me when I called for details. "You'll understand when you get here."
I drove to the location. The deputy met me at the door. "Try and be quiet; their kids are sleeping," he said, leading me inside.

A man and woman were holding each other in the dimly lit hallway, their eyes red from crying. I walked into the living room. Now I understood. Lying on its side was a skinny Christmas tree, nothing but carpet where Christmas presents should have been. "We saved all year for those gifts," the man said to me. "If there's anything you can do…"



Determined, I dusted everything in the house for fingerprints. There was no chance of solving the case without them. By tomorrow the stolen goods would be history. But the thief had been thorough; everything had been wiped. “I’m sorry,” I said to the couple, dismayed. But what could I do? I headed for the door.

Suddenly, a golden glint shined right into my eyes, too bright to ignore. *What’s that?* I wondered. I swung the front door out of the way and looked behind it. On the floor was a gold star tree topper. But it wouldn’t have rolled out of sight. Maybe the burglar had touched it. I dusted it and developed the most complete, full fingerprint I’d ever seen. At the station, I ran it against our records. The identified suspect lived around the corner from the victims. I called the deputy with the information, then we drove back over to the family’s home .

The suspect was cuffed in the back of the police car. The deputy grinned and popped the trunk, full of the stolen gifts. “We got our man,” he said. They got their Christmas back. But not without a little help from a star in dim light—that shone just for me and the family.



Mouse Makes

"The child to be born will be called H__ __ __ , the __ __ __ of __ __ __ "
Luke 1:35

"For unto you is born this day a S__ __ __ __ __ __ who is __ __ R __ __ __ the __ __ R __"
Luke 2:11

"Jesus said, I am the __ __ Y and the __ __ U __ __ and the __ I __ __. No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6

THE GREATEST GIFT

"She will bear a son, and shall call his name __ __ __ __ __ for he will save his people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

"Jesus said, I am the __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ and the life."
John 11:25

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JESUS — THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL!

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C	O	U	N	S	E	L	L	O	R	U	☆		R	☆

EMMANUEL • MESSIAH • REDEEMER • KING OF KINGS • WORD
SON OF MAN • EVERLASTING • SHEPHERD • PRIEST • PROPHET • TEACHER
LIGHT • BREAD • VINE • DOOR • LAMB • COUNSELLOR • CHRISTMAS • GIFT

Find the words from the Bible verses too!

Dec24 © deborah noble @ parishpump.co.uk

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

So, you are excited about being invited to plan your first Carol Service. The dangers involved are only slightly less than being invited to judge the best cake made by the Ladies' Group. You seem to have no idea of the lifelong offence you will inevitably cause. In decades to come when you will either be a seasoned old clergyman – or more likely a double glazing salesman – you will be remembered as "the Curate who offended Mrs Smith."

First, you have to decide which groups are going to be represented to give the readings. If the Brownies were asked last year, then it has to be the Cubs this time. But don't forget that every third year, the Boys' Brigade must be asked, or they will take their revenge and get their flag tangled in the nave chandelier come Remembrance Sunday.
f someone represents the choir, then over a four year period, all four voice parts must be called on – and if the organist isn't asked on the fifth year, then all hymns subsequently will be played at double speed and with one verse missing. Should one person have been invited to read for two successive years, then their annual appearance thereafter will be taken as an inalienable right for the rest of their lifetime – and probably longer than that. To drop them may well invoke legal proceedings,

Then there is the batting order to be considered. Someone from the church council will take it as a deliberate slight if they are

placed lower in the order than a representative of the Men's Fellowship and no self-respecting bell ringer would voluntarily follow a brass cleaner.

If you do not specify where they should read from and how the readings should end, then a form of ecclesiastical inflation will happen. If the first reader speaks from the chancel step, the next one will go to the lectern; after the sanctuary and pulpit have been utilised, the final reader will probably ask you to move so he can take your place. The variations on "Here endeth", "This is the Word of the Lord", and "Thanks be to God", are endless and will increase in length as the Service progresses. The final reader will probably end with a lengthy exegesis on what he thinks the passage means, correcting whatever you said in your sermon.

I once made the mistake of not telling all readers which Bible translation to use. One, an Old Testament expert, therefore decided to read in Hebrew. Not to be outdone, another read her Gospel passage in Greek – apologising beforehand that it may not be a perfect rendering, as she was spontaneously translating it from the English. And some say Christians are not competitive.

You have two alternatives: either repeat last year's Service without any alteration, saying that it could not be improved, or design your own – and then take Christmas off.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace



Word search for Christmas 2024

Father Christmas is based on St Nicholas, who was born in the 3rd century in the Greek village of Patara. From a devout and wealthy family, when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to give to the needy, the sick, the suffering, and was made Bishop of Myra. As a bishop, he was persecuted in prison with other bishops under the rule of emperor Diocletian.

One story of his generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. A poor family, with three daughters needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery. The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of hanging Christmas stockings on Christmas eve.

Father
Christmas
Nicholas
Born
Third
Century
Greek
Village
Devout
Wealthy
Needy
Sick
Suffering
Prison
Emperor
Poor
Family
Three
Daughters
Stockings
Money



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More stories of hope and resilience from Ukraine
Meet Natasha, who stays strong for her children



Natasha and her 13-year-old son, Mykola, vividly recall the loud explosion that resonated as a missile hit a nearby airport in the Kharkiv region waking them at nearly five in the morning… Promptly, Natasha sprang into action, readying her family's cellar as a secure refuge.

The family proceeded to experience a series of harrowing moments as the war unfolded and their village became a battle zone. One came just after Natasha completed bathing her 18-month-old son, Denys. As she settled on the sofa to put him to sleep, the sound of machine gun fire and piercing whistles echoed directly above their home.

“We were looking for his soother [pacifier]. It was probably through an act of God that it became lost. Mykolya went down into the cellar [to look for it]. And then, bang, bang! The door. The windows, of course, the doors, well, rattled.”

At that moment, everyone in Natasha's family knew what they had to do, including 3-year-old Denys. "All he said was, 'Denys to the cellar.' That is to say that a child of 18 months understood already that we had to flee into the basement. He had only just begun to utter the words….," Natasha recalls, still with disbelief.
Soon after tensions rose, the school and youth centre in the village were bombarded and obliterated, depriving local children of a secure space to meet and play. During the war in Ukraine, schools have been a prime target, resulting in over 4,000 educational institutions being impacted since February 24, disrupting the schooling of countless children.

In an attempt to regain some sense of normalcy, the family has returned to their daily routines working on the farm. Natasha works as a milkmaid, while Kolya helps tend the cows when he's not attending school online. With the arrival of humanitarian aid, Natasha and her fellow villagers have united to assist one another in fulfilling their basic needs.

Natasha's son, Mykolya, aspires to excel in his studies and hopes to work with cars or tractors when he's older. He also dreams of the war ending as soon as possible, "So that there are no more of these explosions and air raid warnings. So that there is peace in our land."

As Christmas comes and the New year we pray for their safety and that peace returns to their land very soon.

Sewing Bee Crafts



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Noelle's Christmas Pudding



Ingredients

8 ounces plain flour

1 lb bread crumbs

8 ounces butter

1 teaspoon salt

8 ounces soft brown sugar

1 teaspoon baking powder

18 ounces sultanas

16 ounces raisins

4 eggs beaten

½ bottle of stout,

Grated peel of the lemon

1 teaspn cinnamon

½ teaspn ginger

½ teaspn nutmeg

juice of half an orange and half a lemon

Method

Put all dry ingredients in a bowl

Mix together the wet ingredients and stir mixture together to form a dropping consistency. If mixture stiff add milk gradually to reach

Put into greased pudding at least an inch from the top. Cover with grease proof paper, then foil, more grease proof paper and tie in place with spring and make sure well sealed

Place a trivet or up turned dish or saucer on bottom of the saucepan and pour boiling water in half way up the side of the bowl. Make sure t

the water does not go into the bowl and into the pudding, or boil dry. When bubbling gently turn down the heat to a gentle simmer.

Remember check every hour and carefully top up with boiled water if required.

Steam for 5 hours until cooked, and for a further hour before serving. Alternatively, once cooked, you can heat portions in the microwave before serving.

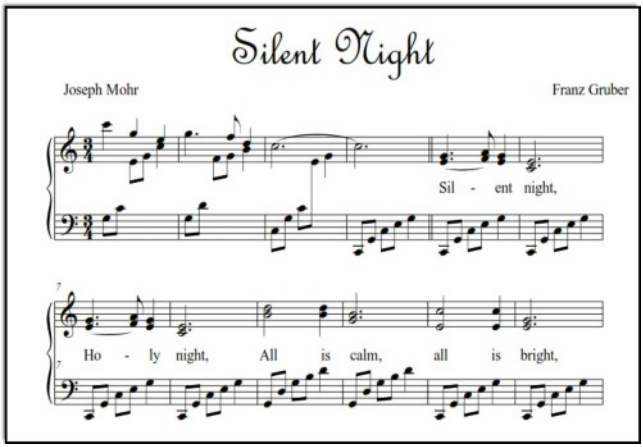
Freezes well



We don't sing carols no more...
you 'ave to listen to 'em off me iPod!

Silent Night - the world's favourite Christmas Carol

Fallout from war and famine



The song's lyrics were originally written in German just after the end of the Napoleonic Wars by a young Austrian priest named Joseph Mohr. In the fall of 1816, Mohr's congregation in the town of Mariapfarr was reeling. Twelve years of war had decimated the country. Mohr's congregation was poverty-stricken, hungry and traumatized. So he crafted a set of six poetic verses to convey hope that there was still a God who cared. "Silent night," the German version states, "today all the power of fatherly love is poured out, and Jesus as brother embraces the peoples of the world."

Mohr, a gifted violinist and guitarist, sought help from a friend. In 1817 he asked his friend Franz Xaver Gruber, a local schoolteacher and organist, to write the music for the six verses. On Christmas Eve, 1818, the two friends sang "Silent Night" together for the first time in front of Mohr's congregation, with Mohr playing his guitar.

The song was well-received by Mohr's parishioners, most of whom worked as boat-builders and shippers in the salt trade that was central to the economy of the region.

The melody and harmonization of "Silent Night" is actually based on an Italian musical style called the "siciliana" that mimics the sound of water and rolling waves. Gruber's music reflected the

daily sound-scape of Mohr's congregation, who lived and worked along the Salzach River.

But to become a worldwide phenomenon, "Silent Night" would resonate far beyond Oberndorf.
According to a document written by Gruber in 1854, the song first became popular in the nearby Zillertal valley. From there, two traveling families of folk singers, the Strassers and the Rainers, included the tune in their shows so the song became popular across Europe, and eventually in America, where the Rainers sang it on Wall Street in 1839.

At the same time, German-speaking missionaries spread the song from Tibet to Alaska and translated it into local languages. By the mid-19th century, "Silent Night" had made its way to subarctic Inuit communities along the Labrador coast, where it was translated into Inuktitut as "Unuak Opinak."

The lyrics of "Silent Night" have always carried an important message for Christmas Eve observances in churches around the world. But the song's lilting melody and peaceful lyrics also reminds us of a universal sense of grace that transcends Christianity and unites people across cultures and faiths.
Perhaps at no time in the song's history was this message more important than during the Christmas Truce of 1914, when, at the height of World War I, German and British soldiers on the front lines in Flanders laid down their weapons on Christmas Eve and together sang "Silent Night."
The song's fundamental message of peace, even in the midst of suffering, has bridged cultures and generations. Great songs do this. They speak of hope in hard times and of beauty that arises from pain; they offer comfort and solace; and they are inherently human and infinitely adaptable.

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Meditation on the Incarnation

After the bright beam of annunciation
fused heaven with dark earth
His searing sharply-focused light
went out for a while
eclipsed in amniotic gloom:
His cool immensity of splendour
His universal grace
small-folded in a warm dim
female space

This extract from Luci Shaw's poem *Made Flesh* captures something of the wonder of the moment when the second person of the Trinity became an embryo.

How does a single cell turn into an infant, and what does that process say about us – and God? These are the questions that Professor Jeff Hardin, a developmental biologist, asks himself. Having studied theology as well as science, he has a unique perspective on embryonic development.

A new-born baby is made of around five trillion cells. These cells come in hundreds of different types, each of which must be in the correct place for the child's body to function properly. Every new life is the result of intricate and highly ordered processes. Three things must happen as an embryo develops.

The first important process is for cells to take on their identity as types of muscle, bone, nerves, and so on. The second is when each cell learns which part of the body it belongs to. Third, those cells are moved around to form the different tissues and organs. These three are not discrete stages, but they all happen at around the same time, building up gradually like the different aspects of a picture coming into focus.

All three of these processes are driven forward by the movement of cells, the connections between them, and the signals they pass to each other. Jeff studies a sort of cellular glue which is involved in joining cells together. Making and breaking these adhesions can affect how cells move and signal to each other, their identity in the body, how they are organised as groups, and ultimately their survival. This glue is found on the surface of cells throughout the animal kingdom, including the small worms Jeff's lab studies.

For Jeff, peering down a microscope at tiny worm embryos can be an act of worship. It is also an exercise in art appreciation, as he learns to appreciate the created order. Understanding the complexities of development, while also being aware that God knows that process intimately both as Creator and created, fills Jeff with a profound sense of awe, wonder and worship.

Does the minute scale of our early development, compared to the incomprehensibly vast and ancient universe, give us a sense of insignificance? Psalm 8 says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

For Jeff and the Psalmist, such feelings can be a positive experience if they serve as a reminder to be humble in the face of a universe that is vastly complicated but also deeply meaningful, made by a God who loves each one of us.

Written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

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New Years in Different Cultures



We know how we celebrate New Year in the UK on first of January. But new years eve is often the focal point of our celebration. We might go out to and watch the fireworks or watch in on the TV counted down with Big Ben then join hands to sind Auld Lang Syne. The next day there is superstition that the first person to enter the house (first footing) brings luck and should bring a lump of coal. And of course, resolutions, say no more.

So what do people from other countries and culturtees do at New year whenever it falls. This is what I found out.

Lunar New Year - Lunar New Year is celebrated in many East Asian countries, including China, Korea, Vietnam, and more. It begins with the first new moon of the lunar calendar and ends with the first full moon of the lunar calendar, which is about 15 days later. These dates vary each year according to Gregorian (Western) calendars but generally begin between January 21st and February 20th. Lunar New Year celebrations, are dedicated to spending time with families, which often includes religious ceremonies honoring ancestors. During the festival, celebrations commonly include receiving red envelopes (*lai see*) with money, dances, fireworks, traditional foods, and a Lantern The festival on the final day of festivities is where may dance and parade colourful dragons through the streets.

Jewish New Year - Rosh Hashanah means “head of the year” in Hebrew, and is the celebration of the new year in Judaism, one of the holiest days of the year. Based on the Hebrew calendar, the holiday occurs on the first day of the seventh month, so it enerally begins in either September or October. It is more subdued and contemplative than other new year celebrations such as eating apples and honey, eating *challah* (a traditional braided bread), throwing bread into a

flowing body of water while reciting prayers (*tashlich*), and wishing each other a good year ("L'shana Tova").

Islamic New Year - follows the lunar calendar, New year is one of the most important holidays in the religion known as the Arabic or Hijrī New Year. The first month of the new year, *Muharram*, is a sacred time of mourning and reflection for Muslims that includes prayer and family time. Customs and celebrations are about fasting, prayer, commemorative foods, and periods of mourning.

Brazil - Wearing white clothing for prosperity, luck, and is meant to ward off evil spirits

Colombia - Carrying empty suitcases in the hopes of a new year filled with travel, as well as holding money to bring financial security in the next year

Spain - Consuming 12 grapes—one for each toll of the clock at midnight—for good luck for each month of the year

Ecuador - Burning effigies to symbolize burning the año viejo, or "old year," and hoping for good fortune in the new one

Denmark - Smashing plates and old dishes as a way to ward off evil spirits

Switzerland - Dropping ice cream on the floor at midnight in the hopes of abundance, good luck, and wealth in the new year

Japan - Known as Oshogatsu, the Japanese New Year is celebrated by sending letters to friends and family, wearing kimonos, attending year-forgetting parties known as *Bonekai,* eating Soba noodles, and giving children small gifts with money inside, known as *otoshidama*

Greece - Festival of Saint Basil - founder of the Greek Orthodox Church. They celebrate by hanging an onion on the door or waking children up by tapping an onion on their heads. Another custom includes eating Saint Basil's cake (*Vasilopita*), which is baked with a silver or gold coin inside to bring the finder luck in the new year

India - People across India celebrate the new year in different ways, including dressing colorfully and partaking in fun activities, like going to parties, playing games, singing, dancing, watching fireworks, and more. Many people also use the holiday as a time to go to do holiday things with together

We are not so different, we all like to be with family, eat good food, drink, celebrate and refelect. Wishing you all a a happy and healthy New Year

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Prayer for our Churches as we walk into the New Year

Dear God, help our church body to walk forward into the New Year in a manner worthy of your calling. Bless our Rector and his family with health, happiness and joy in his vocation as he leads us.

Help us in all our interactions with one another, to have humble and gentle hearts, as we worship and come to your table.

Grant us patience with one another, bind us together with love, support and prayer, as a church family.

Help us to be attentive and open to what you would have us do in our church and our community. Help us to know when to reach out a helping hand or a listening ear; or to simply pray.

May we walk humbly with You, God, allowing You to show us our wrongs. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

An adaptation of a prayer found online



We would love to see you.
Why not join us at 10.30am on Sunday

You Are Welcome Here

No matter:

- Where you've come from or are going;
- What you believe or doubt;
- What you are feeling or just not feeling;
- What you have or don't have; and
- No matter whom you love!

CHANGING ATTITUDE IRELAND

You are welcome at our Church!

Come as you are, as you already are…
Come and join us – our doors are wide open
Bring your life's regrets, or fears and disappointments,
or anything that leaves you sad & low…

It's ok if you're divorced
or you've never had a faith!
If you're full of doubt and don't know where to turn.
For our lives can be so different and better indeed,
if we trust in God and leave the rest to Him.

Bring your partner, bring your friend
Bring the ways you want to mend
and discover what God can do for you today!
Whether you're transgendered, bi or gay, there's no shame in being that way
For God loves you more than you will ever know.

Are you battling addictions or other afflictions?
Or mourning the loss of a loved one?
Simply reach out to Christ
For He understands and you'll find healing and hope in abundance

Come as you are, as you already are, because here you will always be welcome.
If you're depressed, downhearted or despairing?
Then let God do the repairing
For our lives can be so different and better indeed,
if we trust in God and leave the rest to Him.
Jo Pawson

We are blessed at both St Patrick's & St John's Church, with a faith community that is loving, welcoming & inclusive.
May these qualities always be cherished and shared generously with those who come seeking a faith community, love and acceptance.

Farewell dear Jo - pray you find your new church home soon

December & January Church Activities

Together in Faith Group

First and Third Monday each month at 7.30pm
Meet in the Boucher Room, Parochial Hall at St Patrick's Church.
Studying Book of Esther

Book Club

Book Club meets on the last Wednesday of the month
(Contact Paddy Rodgers tel 07720 404071 for venue & date which may vary over summer)

Wednesday Morning Fellowship Group (Monthly)

Next meeting on Second WEDNESDAY of the month **at 11am in the Boucher Room.**
New members welcome. We start with refreshments and fellowship .

Also

Every Week the following

Circus Skills Class

Tuesdays @ 10.30am - Parochial Hall

Indoor Bowling Club

Tuesdays from 7pm -Parochial Hall

New people always welcome to join in

Parish Announcements

The Select Vestry meeting

12th December & 9th January at 10.00 am

St Patrick's Church

Counters for December

1st Dec. Sandra Thompson; **8th Dec. Brian Joyce**

15th Dec. Trevor Peoples **22nd Dec. Scotty Heyes**

29th Dec. Valerie Kincaid

Sunday Refreshments Rota

1st Dec. Heather Craig **8th Dec. Messy Church**

15th Dec. Anna Rollos **22nd Dec. Janet Peoples**

5th Jan. Paddy Rogers **12th Jan. Messy Church**

Refreshments coordinator Priscilla Carlisle Tel 07787561517

Game On Meeting in December

Meeting in the Library on 2nd and 4th Wednesday 1.30pm
New participants welcome. If you are a bit shy, come and see what games we play. Tea and biscuits will be served.

Brasso Club this month

Meets on the Third Thursday of the month at 10am
Bring rubber gloves, some old rags and an old tooth brush if you have one. We use the main church door to enter the church, not the church hall entrance.

Youth Fellowship
Sunday Brunch

will meet on Sunday 1st December and on the 5th January in St Patrick's. We join everyone else in the church for the start of the morning service at 10.30 am before moving into the hall for some Bible study, games, craic and brunch. Anyone of secondary school age or young adult under 25 is welcome to join us. If you want to find out more, please come along or contact Stephen Martin (stepheneddu@gmail.com).



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Dear Reader

You can always spot the Christmas babies as soon as you hear the name. Holly, Ivy and off course Noelle. For me Noelle is very special as that was the name of my dear mum. She would have been 92 years old on Christmas Day.

So,Christmas has never been quite the same since we lost her. Christmas is also difficult for those who lost dear ones at this time of year. I can recollect hearing the Salvation Army playing Silent Night in the corridor outside the intensive care Unit where we worked inside, trying and failing to save the life of a child. After the professionals shed tears with the family.

I work with people who are bereaved as a counsellor. Coming up to Christmas we encourage those mourning their loved ones to recall joyful memories from Christmases past. To close their eyes and go back in their mind to see, hear, smell and taste Christmas with their loved one. It is a privilege to see the smile spread from across their faces, often with tears and that is ok.

So this Christmas day, at some point, I will go back to Christmas as a child and remember my mum. The excitement of the up-cycled bike which 'Santa' had freshly painted to look like new. The smell of the turkey and the taste of the best stuffing in the world. The delicious Christmas pudding. As I write my mouth is watering. I see her face and hear her voice too. Surrounded by her flock, even though it was her birthday, she made the best Christmas for her family, and now I am smiling through tears. Thank you Mum.

Thank you to all Mums, Dads and others who make Christmas special.

May God Bless you all this Christmas and New Year with peace, hope and joy.

Let us remember and reach out to those who mourn this Christmas.

Janet

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed. Psalm 34:18

WHO'S WHO IN THE PARISH

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Registered with NI Charity Commission NIC102649