CHURCH MATTERS

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

Here everyone matters

December 2025 - January 2026

CHURCH OF IRELAND

ST. PATRICK'S & ST. JOHN'S

UNITED PARISH OF WHITEHEAD & ISLANDMAGEE

Blessings for Christmas and New Year



December 2025/January 2026 Services and Readings

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

Sunday 7th December - Advent 2
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Holy Communion Two
Epistle Reading - Romans 15:4-13; Gospel Reading - Matthew 3:1-12
Readers for first Lesson - Scotty Heyes / Sarah Henderson
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 5-8; Psalms 36 - 42; Matthew 13:24 - 14:12

Sunday 14th December - Advent 3 - Houses of Hope (see pages 8-9)
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Morning Prayer Two
Sunday Readings - Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:4-10; Matthew 11:2-11
Reader for first Lesson - Corrine Logan / Maureen Reid
7:00 p.m. Service of Remembrance for loved ones no longer with us
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 9, Jeremiah 30; Psalms 29-42; Matthew 24:15 - 25:30, Hebrews 10:23-39

Sunday 21st 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 11, 28, 29, 33; Psalms 43-56; Luke 1

Wednesday 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

Thursday 25th December - CHRISTMAS DAY
9:00 a.m. Family Service and Holy Communion in St. John's
11:00 a.m. Family Service and Holy Communion in St. Patrick's
Epistle Reading - Titus 2:11-14; Gospel Reading - Luke 2:1-14
Reader for the Epistle - The Rector
Weekday Readings:Psalms 57 - 70; 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 Patrick's**
Readings and Meditations about the Christmas story
Weekday Readings: - Genesis 12 - 28; Psalms 71-84; John 2, 4, 6

JANUARY 2026

Sunday 4th 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 35 - 39; Psalm 85 - 98; Matthew 1 - 3

Sunday 11th 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: 1-9; Psalm 29; Matthew 3: 13-17
Reader for first Lesson - Jane Robinson / Alan Hayward
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 40:1 - 43:13; Psalms 99-105; Mark 1:1 - 3:6

Sunday 18th January - Epiphany 2
8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m.& 12 noon Morning Prayer Two
Sunday Readings; Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-12; John 1:29-42
Reader for first Lesson - Judith de Fleury / Sarah Henderson
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 43:13 - 46:13; Psalms 106 - 112; Mark 3:7 - 5:20

Sunday 25th January - Epiphany 3 - Conversion of St Paul

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Family Service
Sunday Reading: Acts 9:1-22
Reader for first Lesson - The Rector
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 47:1 - 51:8; Psalms 113 - 121; Mark 5:21 - 7:23

Sunday 1st February - 3rd Sunday before Lent - Septuagesima
Presentation of Christ in the Temple

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Holy Communion Two
Epistle Reading Hebrews 2:14-18; Gospel Reading: Luke 2:22-40
Reader for the Epistle - Colin de Fleury / Joy Kerr
Weekday Readings: Isaiah 51:9-57:21; Psalms 122-135; Mark 7:24-9:29

CHOIR for CHRISTMAS

There will be brief rehearsals on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in the Boucher Room at St Patrick's in preparation for our Christmas celebrations.

If you are interested come along and join in with the singing.

All Welcome.

Messy Church

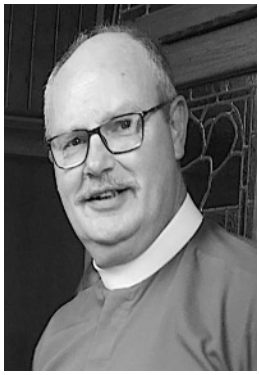
Dates for your diary
Starting at 10:30 a.m. in St Patrick's Parochial Hall, Edward Road., Whitehead.
Come and join us for fun, games, crafts, singing and food as we discover what the Bible says to us.

Sunday 14th December (See "Houses of Hope" on pages 8-9)

Sunday 21st December - NATIVITY SERVICE at 10:30 in St Patrick's Church. (Further details at Messy Church on 14th)

Sunday 11th January

A message from our Rector



At we enter the season of Advent we recognise that another Christmas is almost upon us; and with it the beginning of another New Year. 2025 is almost gone and 2026 will soon be upon us.

With Advent comes our preparation for the Season of Christmas. Today it seems that Christmas is a season that happens before the event and not as a celebration of the event. I have already seen some HUGE inflatable Santa Claus figures whilst on my travels. Christmas decorations up already - since just after Hallowe'en. It seems to be all about the preparation. Even in Church we put the decorations up early now, due to the Victorian Street Fair. Advent has almost ceased to exist as a time of preparation for the Coming of Christ. And that is what is is. A time when we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ. "Coming" something that will happen. Advent is not a celebration that Christ came - that is Christmas - but that Christ promised that he will come again, and receive us unto himself, in his kingdom, *"that where I am you might be also" (John 14:3b)*.

Advent was a time of self examination, a time when we prepared - spiritually - for the coming of Christ. It is a reminder that Jesus promised to come again. That we would "not know the day or the hour" and that he would come "as a thief in the night". In this case it is important that we are prepared and ready. When driving, owning a house and going on holidays, part of our preparation is to have insurance. We hope that nothing will go wrong and that we will never need it but, just in case, we have it (and when driving it is a legal requirement). Advent is like our spiritual insurance. It is us making sure that we are ready - just in case. Some people go to a great deal of effort once a year - when it comes time to renew their insurance. They will check that they are fully covered, that they have the best policy, that every thing is as good as it can be. It should be the same for us spiritually. We should put in a bit of effort to make sure that everything is as good as it can be for us - spiritually. We may want Christ to come again, and usher in the end of the age, but we would rather it did not happen in our lifetime.

So what do we do during Advent? We can, of course, prepare ourselves to celebrate the fact that Jesus was born - in fulfilment of God's promise. We should also look back at our life in the past year and see if

there is room for improvement in our spiritual life. Have we prayed as often as we should? Read our Bible frequently? Have we been active in our Christian living as we helped others in the name of Jesus Christ, as we tried to bring Jesus with us in to our friendships and conversations? We all know that there is room for improvement in these things. So having looked back at our lives we need to look forward as well. We need to look forward and plan how we will make these improvements. Should we plan to attend the Together in Faith Group, or the Wednesday Fellowship Group (details near the back of this magazine). Are there others ways we can improve?

Daily Bible Reading notes (which are available from many sources including:- BRF - Bible Reading Fellowship ; UCB - United Christian Broadcasters; SU - Scripture Union) are a great guide to Bible reading and daily prayer. The Weekday Readings noted in this magazine (pages 2, 3 and 4) are also a guide to planned reading. You can even get Bible Reading Notes in an App for your phone or iPad. There is the Daily Worship App, from the Church of Ireland, giving a short time of worship with readings and prayers for morning and evening every day. It is really much easier than you think to read the Bible every day, and to be guided as to what to read and what it means. It is easy to be guided in prayer, as well as praying for family and friends and the people we share out lives with.

The New Year is upon us! Advent is the start of the Church's year and a much better time to start your improved spiritual life than January. In January there will be another round of 'New Year's Resolutions', so many of which have been made and not kept over the years. Late November/early December, as we enter Advent, is unusual and much more intentional. It will be easier to remember each new Church season, as each new 'Church Matters' is produced, and as the Rector mentions it from time to time in a sermon.

I hope that you have a productive Advent, a wonderful Christmas and a fantastic New Year and that 2026 brings all the happiness you want for you and all whom you love. *Mark*

P.S. - Hospitals! The new administrative system in our Hospitals requires that when you ask about a patient that you know their name and date of birth (or else they cannot be found on the system). I do not want to know everyone's date of birth - far too many numbers to remember. PLEASE let me know if people are in hospital, and what ward they are in. Thanks.

Some humour for Christmas

Versions of Christmas Carols - as sung by children

"..... sleep in heavenly peas"
"Joy to the world, the Saviour rains!"
"Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plane..."
"While shepherds washed their socks by night..."
"On the first day of Christmas my tulip gave to me..."
"Hark! how Harold Angel sings ..."
"O Camel, ye faithful ..."
"..... Noel, Noel, Noel Noel Barney's the King of Israel."

One-liners (in case the Christmas Crackers don't work)

What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations? Tinselitus.

What do you call Santa's helpers? Subordinate Clauses.

Knock, knock! Who's there? Holly. Holly who? Holly-days are here again!

How much did Santa pay for his sleigh? Nothing. It was on the house.

What's red and white, red and white, and red and white? Father Christmas rolling down a hill.

What would you get if you cross a snowman with a vampire? – Frost-bite.

Two snowmen were standing next to each other. One said to the other: "Can you smell carrots?"

Once you've seen one shopping centre, you've seen a mall.

Did you hear about the bakery that was burgled at Christmas? Everything was Stollen!

Why doesn't Father Christmas suffer from claustrophobia when he climbs down the chimney? Because he has had his flue jab.






Our December theme for Messy Church Sunday 14th December



During the Advent and Christmas season, we are looking forward to celebrating the birth of Christ. Each year we remember that when Jesus was born, it was in a stable because there was no room in the inn. The Son of God knew what it was like to be homeless, to be vulnerable. He came to give us hope and a future. Our theme, "Houses of Hope", highlights the need for everyone to have a place to call home.

We will focus on two projects in South America supported by the local Anglican Church, providing care for homeless families and individuals, and providing safe places for vulnerable young girls to live.

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To help bring the project to life, there are two themed resource packs – one for churches and one for families. (Available via the internet through https://bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org).

Each is filled with creative ideas, recipes, templates, activities, and service outlines to help you celebrate Advent with joy and purpose. At Messy Church on Sunday 14th December we use these packs to explore the Houses of Hope project in our teaching and activities. Both packs also include details of the Houses of Hope competition, inviting families to share photos of their gingerbread creations for a chance to win a £50/€50 One4All voucher. Each family at Messy Church will receive a Gingerbread House to take home, build and decorate.

Support

A small amount of money can make a big difference and bring comfort and dignity to someone in need. For example, in Chile £/€16 provides a quality blanket to keep someone warm through the cold nights. £/€10 buys a T-shirt. £/€11 gives someone a special Christmas meal with chicken, potatoes, rice, and a small gift. £/€5 provides a simple but nourishing lunch of chicken, rice, and dessert. £/€5 buys a toiletries pack. £/€5 enables a child to receive a small gift, a reminder they're not forgotten. £/€4 buys underwear.

In the Safe House Project in Brazil, £/€7 covers the cost for a girl's food for the day. £/€7 buys a basic item of clothing. £/€10 covers the fuel needed to get the girls to school for a week. £/€30 provides a session with a psychologist.

There will be an opportunity at all services on 14th December, and at the Nativity services on 21st December to make a donation to this project and to support the work of the Bishop's Appeal Fund, as we help to make a difference in the lives of others at Christmas and beyond.

Let's make this Advent season one to remember, full of creativity, connection, and compassion.

If you are not at church on 14th December you can donate at https://bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org/2025/11/04/houses-of-hope-gingerbread-and-generosity-2025/

A simple Prayer for our Rector and his team



Father, as we move to celebrate the birth of you son, we acknowledge the additional organisation of services and other festivities in our churches through Advent, up to Christmas. We pray for our Rector Mark and his team as they do what is necessary to make Christmas, joyous and meaningful for both congregations and visitors.

We give you thanks Lord for beautiful decoration of both churches for joyous Christmas music and singing. As our souls are uplifted help us be mindful of how we can help. We pray that those working with Mark behind the scenes, get to enjoy it as well. Help us in some way to help those who are unable to get out to church to enjoy this special time in the church calendar.

Amen.

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

For years Alistair Maxwell was the Glebe Warden of St Patrick's Church. During that time a friendship and bond was formed between him and two other persons, which meant a lot of much needed work was done in the church. This included cutting hedges; washing down church steps; painting the parochial hall, plus parts of the church; helping to paint St John's Church; varnishing the floors of the parochial hall and stage room; cutting the grass at the front of the of the rectory when the Rector was on holiday and work inside as well.

This team of three became know as the **'A'** Team, not because they were tough or solved crimes but because they were **Al**istair, **A**ndy and **A**ustin. Alistair would ring and say "we need to do this" and that was what was done.

They also played a big part in the Lenten lunches. One of the biggest jobs that the 'A' team took on was trying to fix the condensation problem in St John's Church, where the water, ran down the walls. Today nearly ten years on it still seems to be working. Sadly the 'A' Team is no more but the memory lives on.

'A' 'A' 'A' Team





(Thanks Austin for sharing this precious memory)

Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland

Do you want another chance at life?

Alcoholics Anonymous meeting

Every Saturday 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Now meeting upstairs at
Whitehead Community Centre:
Call 02890 351222
www.alcoholicsanonymous .ie
All enquiries are treated in strictest confidence

Let us thank God each day for those who struggle to improve their lives, especially those who fight against addiction to alcohol or drugs.
Let us pray for those of their family and friends who have been affected by their addiction.

Cocaine Anonymous

Do you have a problem with drugs and Alcohol?

So did we.

Cocaine Anonymous meeting

Every Monday 8 pm - 9:15 pm
Oakfield Community Centre:
Oakfield Drive, Carrickfergus, BT38 7SP

Call 0330 043 2789 (8 am - 10 pm)
www.caireland.live

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20

Shepherds were paid to look after the flocks out on the hillside. Uneducated and rough, they were usually avoided, or overlooked.



Parish Pump Editor: The Rev Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letter from 'Uncle Eustace to his Nephew'



The Rectory
St James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Your first parish

And so, the old year draws to a close, and you are packing to move to your own first parish in January. Let me give you some final words of advice.

Curates, you will have noticed, are forgiven everything. I hope you have appreciated this period of grace, because come 1st January, all that will change. You will then become responsible for everything that goes wrong in your church. You must be able to mend leaking taps, shovel snow, arrange flowers, mow the churchyard and run jumble sales. You will be expected to know the moment someone falls ill – preferably the day before. In addition, they will expect you to preach profound sermons - in seven minutes flat, and to lead a life of prayerful solitude while being the life and soul of the parish. From the day your predecessor left, he will have turned into a saint. *You* will be their new disappointment. Be assured that *whatever* you do, you will *always* disappoint someone.

Be prepared for phone calls at 3 in the morning, telling you that someone has left a light on in church, and shouldn't you go turn

and it off? You will be asked about car parking arrangements for the October Harvest Service by mid-January, while hymns for the 9 Lessons and Carols will be required by early summer. I suggest you buy in extra pullovers, overcoats and scarves for life in your vicarage. A good number of mousetraps may well come in useful too.

Welcome to your new life as an incumbent.

Expect that each Sunday morning, as you prepare for the service, there will be a straggling queue of people who want to tell you an astonishing variety of things: there is a large cobweb 30 feet up over the pulpit, they don't like the second hymn on the board, the flowers look rough this week, there may be a bat in the vestry, some child has left a shoe in the back porch, and the car park has broken glass in it.

You may find this a distraction as you prepare for a worship service. But remember that at least they have bothered to come to church at all. In my experience, congregations are always irritating, but at least they do take up a lot of space, and that looks good in the pews. The church would look empty without them.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

(Editor: "I am wondering how our Rector Mark would relate to Eustace this month?")

What Does Christmas Mean To You?

When you prepare for Christmas (By Colin Hammacott)

What matters spring to mind?

The coming of the Saviour

Or the gifts that you can't find?





Do you think of baby Jesus

As you deck the halls with holly?

Or are your thoughts preoccupied

With piling high your shopping trolley.



Will you be moved this Christmas

By the sound of carol singing

Or are you more in tune with

The sound of shop tills ringing?



On that family occasion

When you choose your Christmas tree

Do you think of how that tiny babe

Came to die for you and me?



Christmas to you could mean much more

If you're prepared to see

The reasons why each Christmastime

Just mean so much to me.

So as you celebrate this Christmas, why not start anew

And change your perspective on what Christmas means to you.

Christmas Unwrapped!

All of us have received unwanted gifts at Christmas. For Joseph the gift of a child, as recorded in Matthew chapter 1, was not something he really wanted. Although he was engaged to Mary, her pregnancy would be grounds for divorce. Not surprisingly, with the associated social disgrace, Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly (Matthew 1:19). However, God intervened in a dream: '*The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means, God with us.'* (1:23). In a scary and uncertain world, what does the message of ***Immanuel*** say to us today?

God is present with us

God assured Joseph that He was working in all that Joseph was going through. The eternal and creator God entered time and space as a baby. This baby is both uniquely divine but also fully human. This means that we can know God personally, not just know about Him. The Holy Spirit is committed to making Jesus' life and character real in us, and bringing meaning to our circumstances, just as He worked in Mary's life.

God is on our side

Christmas touches some raw nerves in our lives, including stress, family rows, loneliness and financial pressures. However, God does not remain aloof from our experiences. In Jesus He enters our world of hopes and fears, joys and disappointments. He understands what we are going through, as He is alongside us. By the cross and resurrection, He gave His life that we might know His love, joy, peace and forgiveness.

For Joseph, as well as us, the Christmas message is one of hope in an uncertain world. It is a time to re-consider the claims of ***Immanuel*** (*'God with us')* as we entrust ourselves to Him for the coming year.

From Parish Pump
Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham considers the Christmas story.

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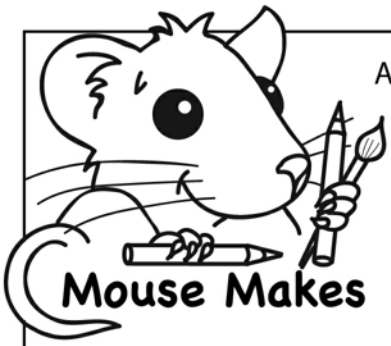


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Mouse Makes

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus,
God's Son and our Saviour
coming into the world as a baby,
and we look forward to the time
when Jesus will come again,
not as a baby but as the
King of kings and Lord of lords!

read
John 14:3

A baby needs clothes
to keep warm like
a snuggly sleep suit
or a vest and nappy.

What were you dressed in?

Jesus was wrapped in

.....

.....

read Luke 2:7

A baby needs somewhere
to be born like at home
or in a hospital.

Where were you born?

Jesus was born
in a stable in

.....

read Luke 2:1-6

A baby needs
somewhere
to sleep like
a crib or a cot.

*What did you
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a

.....

read Luke 2:7

A baby needs
a name.

*What name were
you called?*

Jesus was given
a special name
that had a
special meaning.

read
Matthew 1:21-23

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ☆ NOLLAIG CHRÌDHEIL ☆ NOLLAG SHONA

JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN

Dec25© deborah noble • parishpump.co.uk

Brasso Club

Keeping our brasses in tip top shape

This small, merry band meets on the third Thursday of each month at 10 am, usually for an hour or so. New folks are welcome to join the chat and the cleaning. We aim to keep the shiny things in Church bright and beautiful!

Enter at the front of the Church by the smaller door on the right-hand side.

Cleaning supplies are provided but if you can, bring rubber gloves, cloths, and an old toothbrush for little corners!

Next dates: Thursday 18th December; Thursday 15th January

Thank you for all you do.

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A True Story of Hope at Christmas

The Christmas Tree in the Car Park

In December 2020, the world was quiet. Lock-down had cancelled carol services, Christmas markets, and family gatherings. In a small village in Derbyshire, even the church was closed - its wooden doors shut for the first Christmas in living memory.

At the edge of the church car park stood a single, unlit Christmas tree. It had been delivered by the parish council before restrictions tightened, but no one had been allowed to gather to decorate it. For weeks, it stood bare in the cold, a symbol of the year's loneliness.

Then one morning, just a week before Christmas, someone noticed a single bauble hanging from its lowest branch. The next day, there were two. By the weekend, the whole tree was sparkling.

No one knew who had started it. One family admitted to hanging the first bauble "because it just looked so sad." Then others followed — children on their daily walks, neighbours with spare decorations, an elderly man who brought tinsel from his attic. People began to leave little notes tied with ribbon: messages of love, prayers for lost relatives, and words of hope.

One card read:

"For my mum in hospital — I'll see you soon. Merry Christmas."

Another simply said:

"Thank you to whoever hung the first bauble. You reminded me we're not alone."

By Christmas Eve, the car park had become a place of quiet pilgrimage. Families came at dusk to see the tree twinkling against the dark winter sky. The vicar, unable to hold a service indoors, stood outside that night with a lantern and led a short blessing — just six people, masked and spaced apart, singing *Silent Night*.

Later, the local paper wrote about it, calling it *"the tree that saved Christmas."* But the vicar said it best:

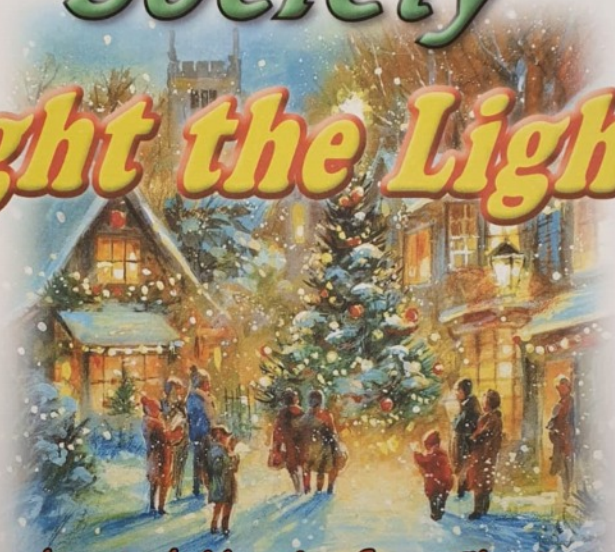
"No one person made it happen. It was the spirit of the village. We couldn't share hugs or pews or mince pies — but we shared hope. And that's what Christmas really is."

That little tree still stands in the car park every December. The baubles are new each year, but the message remains the same: even in the darkest winters, light finds its way back.



Larne Choral Society

Light the Lights



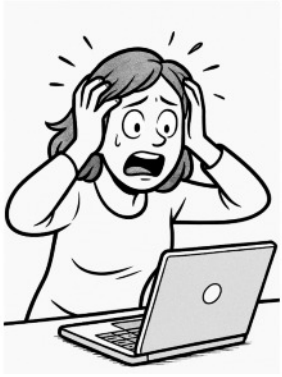
Words and Music for Christmas
with
Larne Choral Society
and special guest
Father Eugene O'Hagan

St. Cedma's Church, Larne

Friday 5th December 7.30pm

Subscription £12 per person
Including light refreshments

People my age and technology!



Recently, I was asked to give a talk on my experiences in Tanzania, working with Leprosy affected people. I hadn't given a talk for some years but I thought, sure it's saved on my computer, i'll be alright. A week before the date, I looked out my presentation bits and bobs which included a memory stick with, I thought, all I needed. I plugged it into the computer I use but nothing worked! All my precious photographs were gone. How did that happen? What will I do?

Now, at this stage of life, when I hit problems with technology, I go in to a blind panic and forget everything I ever knew! What could I do? Well of course I contacted my friends in the Lisburn office for The Leprosy Mission. On hearing my problem, they offered to help me with photos and an up-date of what is happening with T.L.M. Off I drove to Lisburn. Stephen, who manages the I.T. in the office spent time organising a presentation and even finding archived photos of Tanzania to help me. Great!

On the Monday, I put in the memory stick and nothing was there! Again! Then the little grey cells came into action. Does the computer I am using have Power Point? Of course it didn't. More delving into redundant knowledge – how to I sort this? With the help of Google of course (That's what my son's always telling me, anyway). I down loaded what I needed and hey presto, the presentation worked. Relief!

I contacted the church I was to speak at and they said they had all I needed. Tuesday evening came. I arrived with my precious memory stick in my hand. I met the lady who organises the Ladies group. (I should say, she's the same age as me!) "I am sorry, Andrew is busy tonight and so won't be here to help" Panic! "But he has told me everything I need to do so we will be fine" More Panic!

“OK I know how to start everything. We just turn all these things on. Oh dear I’ve forgotten my glasses! Oh dear, it’s password protected. Andrew didn’t tell me that! I will just ring my son. “ Johnathan, I am at the church computer. Do you know the password? Yes, good. Tell me it and I will type it in. Oh I can’t see very well and it hasn’t worked!

“Why can’t you see, Mum? “I have forgotten my glasses. I will put the phone on speaker and you can tell Sandra and she can type it in. Ah hah! We are in! Thank you.”

I put my memory stick in and the whole screen freezes. Major panic!! Johnathan tries to calm us down and tells us how to exit the programme. Press F4. Of course I press F and my friend presses 4. “Did you two just press two different keys? Came Johnathan’s question. Much scratching of heads. He says he will come over to the church.

Meanwhile many of the ladies have arrived. One of whom says, “Darren is upstairs at the young people’s Bible study. He will help” “Really, could you please ask him?

Darren is duly summoned and the situation explained. With a slightly disguised roll of his eyes, he types on the keyboard at high speed. “There you go. “To which I add two more questions. Can you merge these two presentations together so that I don’t half to interrupt the talk? And how do you work the clicker to change pictures? By this time, I am mortified! He goes into speedy action again and it’s sorted in a few seconds.

Now I know why I gave up doing these presentations 5 years ago! However, I thank God that He had provided me with someone who knew what they were doing with technology. The talk went very well and many more people now know about Leprosy. I thank God for ensuring that I had all I needed to be able to do His work.

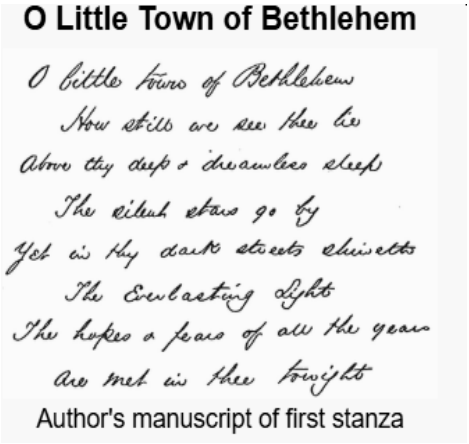
(Thanks Sandra for sharing this, my heart was racing reading it and I like the theme that emerged - Had all that I needed. Janet)

OH LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM The story Behind the Carol

Phillips Brooks (1835–1893), an Episcopal priest, then rector of Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, was inspired by visiting the village of Bethlehem in Jerusalem in 1865. HE wrote the poem for his church, and his organist Lewis Redner (1831–1908) added the music.

The text of the carol was first published in The Sunday School Service and Hymn Book, arranged by the Sunday School Committee of the Diocese of Ohio in five verses of eight lines. The organist states "Brooks told me that he had written a simple little carol for the Christmas Sunday-school service, and he asked me to write the tune to it. The simple music was written in great haste and under great pressure. We were to practice it on the following Sunday. Mr. Brooks came to me on Friday, and said, "Redner, have you ground out that music yet to 'O Little Town of Bethlehem'?" I replied, "No", but that he should have it by Sunday. On the Saturday night previous my brain was all confused about the tune. I thought more about my Sunday-school lesson than I did about the music.

But I was roused from sleep late in the night hearing an angel-strain whispering in my ear, and seizing a piece of music paper I jotted down the treble of the tune as we now have it, and on Sunday morning before going to church I filled in the harmony. Neither Mr. Brooks nor I ever thought the carol or the music to it would live beyond that Christmas of 1868.



Author's manuscript of first stanza

My recollection is that Richard McCauley, who then had a book-store on Chestnut Street west, printed it on leaflets for sale. Rev. Dr. Huntington rector of All Saints' Church, Worcester, Mass., Asked permission to print it in his Sunday-school hymn and tune book, called The Church Porch.

The Carol was published in Hymns Ancient and Modern in 1922. To-day it is usually performed by

choirs rather than as a congregational hymn. This is because the first two verses are for treble voices with organ accompaniment, with only the final verse as a chorale/refrain harmony. This setting includes a recitative from the Gospel of Luke at the beginning, and cuts verses 2 and 4 of the original 5-verse carol. This version is often performed at the service of Nine Lessons and Carols in King's College, Cambridge.

It was first recorded and released by English singer Cliff Richard in 1982 who had a Christmas hit with it in the UK. In the US, by American CCM artist Amy Grant, released on her 1983 Christmas album. A new tune for O little Town of Bethlehem called "Enmore" by the composer Philip Trumble was first published in 1987. This beautiful Carol transports us to Bethlehem so we can in awe, almost see the birth of Jesus.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. *O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie:*
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, The Everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years, Are met in thee tonight.

2. For Christ is born of Mary, And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep. Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together, Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King, And peace to men on earth.

3. How silently, how silently The wondrous gift is giv'n;
So God imparts to human hearts The blessing of His heaven;
No ear may hear His coming, But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still The dear Christ enters in

4. Where children pure and happy Pray to the blessed Child:
Where Misery cries out to Thee, Son of the undefiled;
Where Charity stands watching, And Faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks, And Christmas comes once more.

5. O Holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray,
Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today;
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel!



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

Can you imagine!

Now it is your turn for Sudoku.

Pencil and rubber and your favourite cuppa or a nice glass of wine and few nibbles.

Little more challenging to keep you occupied for longer over the Christ-mas holiday

Answers page 41

	5					3	7	
			2	7	6			
7					1			
2		3		1				
		7				6		
				3		4		5
			1					9
			5	9	4			
	6	2					1	

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Christmas Music & Song

Monday 8th December 2-3pm

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Admission is free, but sure you'll want to buy a coffee and mince pie. Then afterwards why not browse the festive shop.

The innocence of children, makes us smile at Christmas.

True story
The nativity play was going as planned and Joseph and Mary were going from 'house' to 'house' knocking on the doors and asking it there was any room for them.

As they continued to get 'no room' answers, a little voice called from the back of the church: "You should have booked!"

Who was the Real Virgin?
A ten-year-old, under the tutelage of her grandmother, was becoming quite knowledgeable about the Bible. Then one day she floored her grandmother by asking, "Which virgin was the mother of Jesus? The virgin Mary or the King James Virgin?"

Know what?
As we were putting out cookies for Father Christmas one Christmas Eve, I accidentally dropped one. I picked it up and dusted it off before placing it back on the plate. "You can't do that," argued my four-year-old. But I assured him that Father Christmas would never know.

He shot me a dubious look. "So, he knows if I've been bad or good all year, but he doesn't know if you dropped his cookie on the floor?"

Let's play
Four-year-old to her two-year-old sister: "Let's play Christmas. I'll be Father Christmas, and you can be a present and I'll give you away."

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Make delicious fudge for Christmas gifts



- ***Ingredients***
- *397gm tin condensed milk*
- *100ml/3½fl oz Irish cream liqueur or cream*
- *400gm/14oz white chocolate, broken into squares with 3 squares reserved and roughly chopped*
- *200gm/7oz dark chocolate, broken into squares with 3 squares reserved and roughly chopped*
- *Choice of topping - sea salt flakes, coconut or finely chopped nuts*

Method

- Line a 20cm/8in square cake tin with baking paper.
- Pour the condensed milk and Irish cream into a microwave-safe bowl. Add the white chocolate (keep 3 roughly chopped squares for top). Stir to combine. Cook in the microwave on high for 2–3 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds, until the mixture is glossy and all the chocolate is melted.
- Remove from the microwave and add the dark chocolate (keep 3 roughly chopped squares for top). Stir gently until the mixture is smooth and thick. Scrape into the prepared tin and level the surface.
- Sprinkle the chopped white and dark chocolate and choice of topping over the surface of the fudge. Chill for at least 3 hours, or until the fudge is firm enough to cut without the knife getting stuck. Cut the fudge into small squares, roughly 36 pieces.
- When chilled gift-wrap.

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- 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

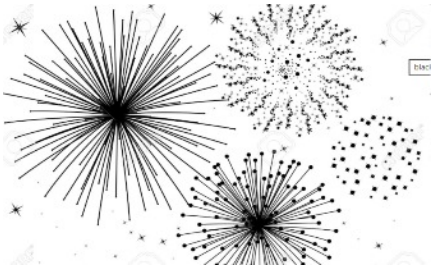
New Year is a Christian Festival. January 2, 2018 by Ian Paul

A happy accident of our calendars, with Christmas Day coming just 8 days before the new year, gives a symbolic context for this reflection, as Ro Mody pointed out: Happy Feast Day of the Circumcision of Jesus Christ (and first time Jesus gave his blood for a sinful humanity.)

Not many people realise that New Year is a Christian Festival. 1st Jan marks the Day that Jesus was presented in the Temple, formally received the name "Jesus," and was circumcised. Time is divided between BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini; the year of the Lord). Therefore this is the 2,018th year of the rule of the Christ. A Very Happy New Year. ***"And when eight days were fulfilled for circumcising him, his name was called Jesus, which was so called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." (Luke 2:21.).*** *"Almighty God, who caused your blessed Son to be circumcised and obedient to the law for mankind, grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit so that, our hearts and bodies being dead to all sinful desires, we may obey your holy will in all things through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

How, then, do we go about facing the hope-filled possibility of the year to come? Martin Saunders highlights the problem with traditional approach of making resolutions, echoing something I have said in previous 'new year' blog posts: In truth, life just isn't that neat. We don't put our vices behind us overnight, nor can we suddenly turn over a new leaf. So instead of New Year's resolutions, we might be better of with an approach to self-improvement that takes a more realistic view of how people change: slowly and with a few setbacks along the way. So, why not try something else this year?

Rather than making resolutions, why not set goals? Goals that reflect what we believe God desires of us which will please him and make a difference to us and others. Read more at this link.
https://www.psephizo.com/life-ministry/what-does-the-new-year mean/



Apple and Cinnamon Cake (Mary Berry Recipe)

Ingredient
225 gm self-raising flour.
1 tsp baking powder.
100 gm butter (softened).
225 gm caster sugar
2 large eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 medium apples (peeled, cored, and diced)
1-2 tsp ground cinnamon



Preheat your oven to 180°C (160°C fan) or 350°F. Grease a 20 cm round cake tin and line the bottom with parchment paper for easy removal.

In a mixing bowl, cream the softened butter and caster sugar together using an electric mixer or whisk until light and fluffy, about 3-4 minutes.

Step 3: Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the vanilla extract to enhance the cake's flavour.

In a separate bowl, sift together the self-raising flour, baking powder, and cinnamon. Fold these dry ingredients gently into the wet mixture until just combined.

Fold the diced apples into the batter, ensuring they are evenly distributed throughout the mixture. Keeping some back for the top

Pour the batter into the prepared cake tin, smoothing the top with a spatula. Place the remaining apples on top and sprinkle, dust with sugar.

Bake in the preheated oven for 45-50 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. The top should be golden brown and the cake should feel springy to the touch. Enjoy hot as desert, cool as cake, with custard, cream or ice-cream - yum!

Parish Announcements

The Select Vestry

meets on Wednesday, 10th December and 14th January at 7pm
in Boucher room, St Patricks

Counters

December		January	
07/12/2025	Scotty Heyes	05/122026	Valerie Kincaid
14/12/2025	Brian Joyce	12/01/2026	Sandra Thompson
21/12/2025	Trevor Peoples	19/01/2026	Colin de Fleury
28/12/2025	Sandra Thompson	26/01/202	Scotty Heyes

Refreshments Rota

December	January
7th Dec Janet Matthews	3rd Jan Paddy Rogers
14th Dec Messy Church	10th Jan Messy Church
21st Dec Janet and Trevor	17th Jan Scotty Heyes
28th Dec Priscilla Carlisle	24th Jan Sheila Mason
	31st Jan Inez Moore

Refreshments coordinator Priscilla Carlisle - Tel 07787561517

Thank you to all involved in setting up, baking, serving food, manning the stalls, welcoming local community into St Patrick's Victoria Bazaar and then helping us to clear it all away at the end.

Game On Meeting

Meeting in the Library usually second and fourth Wednesday
but only one meeting in December the 10th
back to two meetings in January -14th and 28th
Time 1.30 pm
Some members play Mexican Train, others Backgammon.
New participants always welcome. Come and join us for tea and biscuits,

Church Activities

Together in Faith Group

Meets on Wednesday 3rd December,
(and then returns to 1st and 3rd Mondays in the month)
Monday 15th December - 7.30pm
Then 12th January and 19th January - 7.30 pm
Meet in the Boucher Room, Parochial Hall
St Patrick's Church.

Book Club

Christmas Book Club - sharing Christmas Stories, poems Dec 3rd at 7.30 pm
Book Club returns to regular time in January - the last Wednesday of the month (28th 7.30pm)
(Contact Paddy Rodgers tel 07720 404071)

Wednesday Morning Fellowship

(Second Wednesday in the month)
Next meeting 10th December at Valerie's House and
14th January at 11am in the Boucher Room.
We start with refreshments and fellowship from 10.45.

Circus Skills Class

Come along and try some light exercise and may be learn a few manual dexterity skills on Tuesdays @ 10.30am - 12 noon - Parochial Hall

Indoor Bowling Club

Tuesdays from 7pm - Parochial Hall

New people always welcome to join in all the groups

Youth Fellowship Sunday Brunch

7th December, 4th January & 1st February

Anyone of secondary school age (or young adult under 25) is welcome to join us. We'd love to see some new members.

We take part in the first few minutes of the service in St Patrick's at 10.30 before moving into the hall for Bible study, prayer, games and fun.
If you want to find out more, please come along or contact Stephen Martin (stepheneddu@gmail.com).



1	5	6	9	4	8	3	7	2
3	9	4	2	7	6	1	5	8
7	2	8	3	5	1	9	4	6
2	4	3	6	1	5	8	9	7
5	8	7	4	2	9	6	3	1
6	1	9	8	3	7	4	2	5
4	3	5	1	6	2	7	8	9
8	7	1	5	9	4	2	6	3
9	6	2	7	8	3	5	1	4

Suduko solution

How did you get on ?

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Hoping you are well, or as well as can be expected, if this is not a good time for you. Many of us are feeling the cold, or may be a bit under the weather with the short days, longer nights. Some are needing to be cared for or to care for someone else. Some of us struggle with aches and pains. I don't know why it seems more difficult to cope with our lot during the winter. Yes we do try to bear our burdens with grace but it is *bloomin* hard to 'grin and bear it,' putting on a brave face.

This morning (12th Nov. at the Wednesday Fellowship) while enjoying our tea and buns, we were encouraged to recall earliest memories of childhood, of precious people and places and much more. We enjoyed this exercise, becoming aware of how fortunate we are. Then our minds turned of those whose memories of childhood, of young life, are too painful , traumatising, to recall. We got a little choked up by this so we prayed for them.

Later on. I became aware of God working in the darkness in the stories shared - The story of a man who was trying to end his life of a bridge in Belfast and two homeless people and a police woman getting him down from that bridge, saving his life. We heard about the wonderful teacher each day, having a banana for the young boy at school who offered to go home with her to do her ironing, to escape his terrible home life. Thank God for his servants quietly shepherding his flock. I am sure you have your own stories of God's light in the darkness.

So to end on a story of light, Sheila had us all in stitches when she told us their first Christmas tree was lit up by a car battery. So praying you have light and hope this Christmas and New year, and that in some small way you can bring light and hope to others.
For some reason chocolate comes to mind.

Love and blessings



WHO'S WHO IN THE PARISH

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Website: **www.whitehead-islandmagee-parish.co.uk**

CHURCHWARDENS

	St. Patrick's	**St. John's**
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People's:	Mabel Allen	John Hall

GLEBEWARDENS

St. Patrick's - Trevor Peoples St. John's - Jim Reid

SELECT VESTRY (includes Churchwardens & Glebewardens)

Geradine Scott-Heyes Hon Secretary 07702431610
Sandra Thompson - Hon Treasurer 07912478331
Ann Mulholland; Bill Pollock;
Priscilla Carlisle; Pauline Riddle; Paul Heyes;
Janet Matthews; David Young; Terry Waugh;
Inez Moore Austin Jenkins - Graveyard Manager St John's

Messy Church

in the Parochial Hall on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 10:30 a.m.
Contact the Rector if you plan to come.

Youth Fellowship Leader

Stephen Martin - stepheneddu@gmail.com

Safeguarding Trust Evelyn Powers 9337 2535 Valerie Kincaid 07909 545651

Flowers: St Patrick's: - Judith de Fleury 07855736510
St .John's: - Ann Thompson 9338 2295

FWO & Gift Aid Sec: Sandra Thompson 07912478331

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'Tis the Season… to Survive.

Domestic abuse makes Christmas the most dangerous time of year for many women and children.

Woman's aid collection for Christmas

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