CHURCH MATTERS

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

Here everyone matters

February 2026

CHURCH OF IRELAND

ST. PATRICK'S & ST. JOHN'S

UNITED PARISH OF WHITEHEAD & ISLANDMAGEE





February Services & Readings

Each Wednesday there is a service in St Patrick's Church at 11:30 a.m. You are all welcome to come and join in prayer for 30 minutes.

Sunday 1st February - 3rd Sunday before Lent
St Brigid; Presentation of Christ in the Temple

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Holy Communion Two
Epistle Reading 1 Corinthians 1:18-318; Gospel Reading Matthew 5:1-12
Reader for the Epistle - Colin de Fleury / Joy Kerr
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Genesis 18 - 23; Psalms 122 - 135; Matthew 27:11 - 28:20

Sunday 8th February - 2nd Sunday before Lent - Creation

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m.& 12 noon Morning Prayer Two
(No Messy Church this month due to School half-term holidays)
Sunday Readings: Genesis 1:1- 2:3; Psalm 136:1-9; Matthew 6:25-34
Reader for first Lesson - Jack McKinney / Jim Reid
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Genesis 29-35, Psalms 136 - 150; 2 Timothy 4, Titus, Philemon

Sunday 15th February - Sunday before Lent - Transfiguration

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One
10:30 a.m.& 12 noon Morning Prayer Two
Sunday Readings: Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 2; Matthew 17:1-9
Reader for first Lesson - Nigel Tilson / Maureen Reid
7:00 p.m. Compline
Weekday Readings: Genesis 37 - 41; Psalms 1-10; Galatians 1:1 - 3:22

Wednesday 18th February - ASH WEDNESDAY - First day of Lent

11:30 a.m. Penitential Service
Readings - Isaiah 58:1-12; Psalm 51:1-18; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
7:00 p.m. Service for Ash Wednesday
Readings - Isaiah 1:10-18, Psalm 102; Luke 15:11-32

Sunday 22nd February - 1st Sunday of Lent

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One

Cathedral Sunday - the Rector is preaching in St Anne's Cathedral this morning. There will be no morning Service in St Patrick's or St John's. You are all welcome to come and share in the worship in St Anne's and listen as the Choir leads us in worship. (See Page 7)

7:00 p.m. **Hymn festival/Songs of Praise - details on page 23**

Weekday Readings: Genesis 42-43; Psalms 11-20; Galatians 3:23 - 6:18

Sunday 1st March - 2nd Sunday of Lent

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One

10:30 a.m. & 12 noon Holy Communion Two

Epistle Reading Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; Gospel Reading John 3:1-17

Reader for the Epistle - Corrine Logan / Alan Hayward

7:00 p.m. Compline

Weekday Readings: Genesis 44 - 46; Psalms 21-30; Hebrews 1:1 - 4:13

Sunday 8th March - 3rd Sunday of Lent

8:30 a.m. Holy Communion One

10:30 a.m. MESSY CHURCH

10:30 a.m.& 12 noon Morning Prayer Two

Sunday Readings: Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; John 4:5-42

Reader for first Lesson - Heather Cupples / Sara Henderson

7:00 p.m. Compline

Weekday Readings: Genesis 47-50; Psalms 31-40; Hebrews 4:14 - 8:13

Messy Church

Dates for your diary

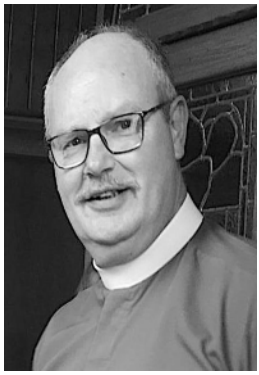
Starting at 10:30 a.m. in St Patrick's Parochial Hall, Edward Road., Whitehead.

Come and join us for fun, games, crafts, singing and food as we discover what the Bible says to us.

No Messy Church in February due to a lot of people being away during half-term.

Next Messy Church Sunday 8th March

A message from our Rector



Once again we are coming into the season of Lent, as we do year upon year. This can be an issue; not Lent as such but the year on year bit. For some the idea of Lent is a bit vague; they are not really sure what Lent is about. Oh, they know it has to do with temptation - based on the 40 days in which Jesus was tempted in the wilderness - but are not sure what they should be doing with this piece of information. For others it is about self discipline and personal abstinence, for the good of their soul - the whole wilfully doing without something important to them for Lent and spending time in prayer or reflection instead. For others is is about the physical health implications of giving something up for Lent that my be harmful to them, cutting down or giving up smoking was a great one in the past; most make do with chocolate, sweets, biscuits or something else they consume, the reduction of which is beneficial for their health. Then there are those for whom Lent and the concept of some form of abstinence is no longer relevant either physically or spiritually, it has no real meaning for them any more as they do not pray nor is there a health benefit.

Lent is about using the information about Jesus and his temptations in a way that benefits us spiritually. There can be a physical benefit as well, but above all things the benefit to the soul is foremost. We are not just remembering that Jesus was hungry and thirsty during those forty days in the wilderness. We are remembering that **though** he was hungry and thirsty, a real physical hunger and thirst, his response was not physical but spiritual - "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." *(Matthew 4:4 - quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3)*.

In his book, The Picture of Dorian Gray, (Chapter 2) Oscar Wilde writes "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself," Part of the purpose of Lent is that we are able to strengthen our souls to the point where they do not grow sick with longing for the things that we have forbidden to ourselves. We do this with the help of God in reading his word for support and encouragement and in prayer, seeking the strengthening of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us in the choices we make.

So we do not just "give something up", we actively use prayer and reading God's word to aid us.

That is all well and good, you may say, for the things of physical temptation. What about the other two temptations?

If you look at them the three temptations of Jesus are; the physical temptation (satisfying the hunger), the mental temptation (the desire of the ego for recognition and power), and the spiritual temptation (a shortcut to the fulfilling God's plan and purpose)

These three temptations are there for all of us. But during Lent we focus mainly on the physical temptation. We 'give up' chocolate, sweets, biscuits, wine, or what ever other physical thing we decide. And that is great, we deal with one of the temptations. What do we do about the other temptations? What do we do to deal with them? Do we actively put other people first? Do we seek to give more time to God's will and purpose? For years I have suggested that during Lent we spend more time in prayer and studying the Bible than normal. Do we do it? Rather than eating or drinking something that we have given up we spend that time in prayer - not at the end of the day but right there and then. We know that this is what we should do, but what excuse will we make to ourselves not to do it?

So this year, will we? Will we seek, during Lent, to put other people first? Will we make those around us feel, and know, that we care about them by placing their wants and needs before our own? (Who knows, they may be doing the same for us so it is a 'win, win' for all concerned.)

This year will we spend more time in prayer; praying for family and friends, for the sick, those in need, those who are bereaved or are just feeling lonely. Will we spend a bit more time reading the Bible and pondering what it means? (There are recommended readings for each week on pages 2 and 3 of this and next month's magazine.) [In some of our local supermarkets there are free Bible reading notes available at the entrance.]

This Lent, take temptation seriously. Make an effort to not just 'give something up' but also to take up the spiritual things, prayer and Bible reading, that will improve our lives. Also, take up the care and concern for others that places them before ourselves. It will improve their lives and ours.

I hope that you all have a blessed Lent. That you arrive at Easter ready to praise God for the resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that you, and all you love, are assured of your place in heaven. *Mark*

CHURCH OF IRELAND

ST. PATRICK'S & ST. JOHN'S

UNITED PARISH OF WHITEHEAD & ISLANDMAGEE

LENTEN LUNCHES

All welcome to join us for a weekly community meal

Every Wednesday 12-2pm from 18th February to 1st April 2026

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‘Cathedral Sunday’
St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast
11:00 a.m. Sunday 22nd February 2026

What is a ‘Cathedral Sunday’?

For us it is an invitation to join in worship at St Anne’s. This is because the Rector is a Canon in St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, and every 14 - 18 months, or so, each of the Canons are invited to preach at the morning service.

When this has happened in the past, the last time was late 2024, I have invited the congregation to come with me and avail of this valuable opportunity to be able share in worship with a different congregation in a different place, in this case in St Anne’s, Cathedral - hence Cathedral Sunday.

Most people have said that they really enjoyed the experience of the music and sharing together.

It should be easy to arrange shared transport for those who want to go to St Anne’s. For those who are unable to make it there are two services, at 8:30 am and at 7:00 pm our Songs of Praise/Hymn Festival service (see page 23) in Whitehead which they can attend.

Why share in worship with different people in a different place?

We are only one small part of the body of Christ, that is the Church. It is good for us to share worship with others, to remind ourselves that we are not alone but are part of something much larger. That we are part of a larger Church in our Diocese.

It is also good for the congregation in St Anne’s to know that we are there praying for and with them as they pray for and with us.

We will hear the organ and the Cathedral choir as they lead us in worship through music as we join in the hymns and listen to the anthem.

There is an opportunity to have ‘a wee day out’, and may be even have lunch in Belfast - or if you are mad keen, come to the Cathedral for Choral Evensong (no sermon) at 3:30 p.m. to hear the choir again.

In St Anne’s it is important to dress warmly as it is huge space to try and heat - also will make us appreciate our own warmer churches a bit more.

What is a Canon?

The short version is:- The Rector is a Canon.

The slightly longer version is:- in the old days (about 1000 years ago) Canons were clergy who helped to run the Cathedral by advising the Bishop, the Diocese. The Canons were, basically, the Cathedral's Select Vestry (in the days before there were Select Vestries).

Mostly the Canons lived at or near the Cathedral (often in houses in the Cathedral precincts) and spent their time taking services, dealing with pilgrims who came to see the splendour of the cathedral and being involved in the administration of the Cathedral and the Diocese. In those days Canons were not living and working in Parishes as they are now.

Things changed through the centuries and with increasing lay involvement in administration and fewer clergy for Parish ministry the role of the Canons changed. Now, and for a considerable time, a Canon is mostly an honourific title (a title given as an honour to clergy whom the bishop wants to reward for one reason or another).

There is no real role for Canons but many cathedrals encourage their canons to be involved in the worship of the Cathedral, mainly through coming to preach. This is done to help build a better relationship between the Cathedral and the Parishes of the Diocese.

St Anne's is unusual as a Cathedral because it is not a Diocesan Cathedral. Over 125 years ago it was felt that Belfast, the industrial, financial and political capital of the northern part of Ireland lacked a Cathedral. So St Anne's was planned and built. At the time it served the United Diocese of Down, Connor and Dromore. Since 1945, when they split it serves both Connor as well as Down and Dromore but belongs to neither

So, in ecclesiastical terms, it is called a 'peculiar'(meaning that it is exceptional) in that other than not service a Diocese it also has two cathedra (Bishop's 'throne') rather than one. Thus St Anne's has to work harder at building its relationships with the Parishes in both of the Diocese that it serves.

Most of the Canon's encourage their congregations to come and share in worship when they preach in St Anne's. As stated above it is good for the Parish congregation and for the Cathedral congregation.

I hope that as many of you as possible will come to St Anne's to share in worship on 22nd February.

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www.alcoholicsanonymous .ie
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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.

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Letter from St James the Least of All

On the art of drinking well



The Rectory

St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

You closed your last letter with the remark that it was time to retire to bed with a cup of cocoa. That may be all very well for the pious intensity of a theological college - although a stiff whisky was always acceptable in my day - but it is not a style to continue once in the parish. I do feel obliged to give you a few hints about what should and should not be drunk in public as a parish priest.

Morning visits are to be discouraged, but if one is unavoidable, and you are invited to have a drink, then it has to be coffee. It is the only time of day when a mug is acceptable - provided, of course, that it is bone china or porcelain. In the afternoons one changes to tea, but only from cups. Blended varieties may be all very well for Curates in their first year, but it should be Darjeeling for an incumbent. And fruit teas are for Quakers only.

If an inappropriate vessel is offered, then the drink should be accepted, but left untouched. Since the visit will be discussed in the finest detail throughout the parish the moment you have left, your host will soon learn why and not make the same error a second time. It is for the same reason that if you ever want to circulate a piece of news round the parish as quickly as possible, never put it in the parish magazine, just mention it casually during one of your visits. Everyone will know by teatime.

Alcoholic drinks must be carefully judged. A sherry - dry, naturally - is probably best if you are invited to lunch. In the early evening, a gin and tonic would be the drink of choice. To ask for whisky would indicate that you are about to go over to Rome, and a mineral water that you have your roots in non-conformity. Beer is never, ever drunk in someone's

house unless you suffer from some personal tragedy, such as being the diocesan youth chaplain.

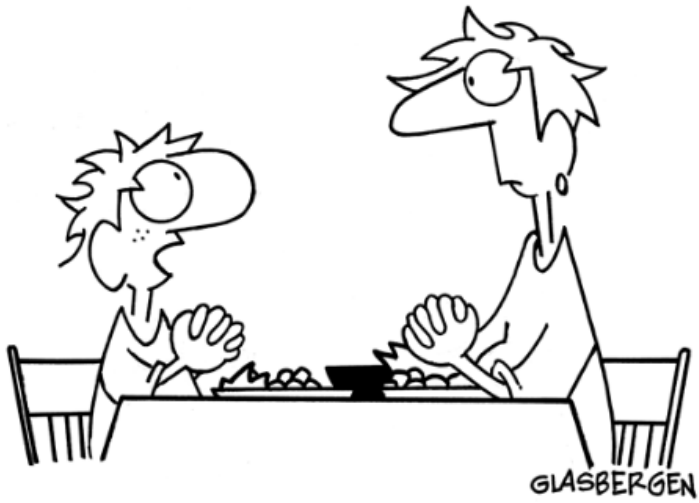
However, an occasional beer in the pub with the bell-ringers (who will be real ale fanatics to a man) or after choir practice - which seems to be the real purpose of holding practices anyway - or as a treat for the sacristan, will show you are a man of the people. It is some years since I visited the pub.

Understanding wine should be taught at every theological college as an essential part of the ministry. Develop a taste for claret, dear boy, and you will be starting your journey towards high office.

And perhaps you should give that tin of cocoa to the verger.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace



"If God wants me to be thankful for vegetables, why did He make them taste like vegetables?"

Strories of Hope from Ukraine Anastasiya

Anastasiya remembers that the weather in Dnipro was warm and sunny. She and her father were inside their apartment while her son was playing outside. It was 14 January – the day their lives changed in an instant. **"We heard a dull thud. I ran headlong from the fifth floor to [outside] to look for my son. And only then I realised that a rocket had hit my house."**

Anastasiya, her father and her son survived the missile attack on their apartment that killed dozens of people and injured many more. They are now staying in temporary accommodation.

With your support, Anastasiya and others like her received emergency supplies, clothing and cash assistance. They are also receiving counselling - a service that Anastasiya sees as the next step in her family's healing and recovery.

"All we need now is psychological support … to get back to normal life and to understand how to move on and build the future. Because now we have kind of stopped and live only for tomorrow," she says. **"Our hopes are to come back to our apartment and rebuild, that children again can loudly play in the yard and we can hear their laughs; that skies are blue and peaceful."**

We Pray for her and all those who are homeless, for the agencies who help them. We pray for an end to the ward in Ukraine.

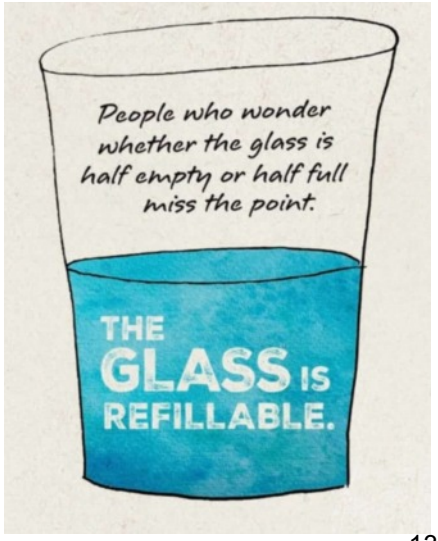
https://www.unrefugees.org.au/our-stories/five-stories-of-courage-from-ukraine/ to find more stories and donate.



Anastasiya

"What you do to the least of these you do to me"

(Matthew 25:40),



Just remember to fill it up and then you



I'd add enjoy fellowship at our church

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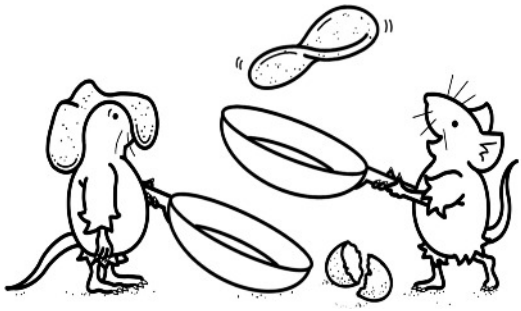
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What is the significance of pancakes on Shrove Tuesday?

The tradition of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday is said to have originated as a way to use up rich ingredients like eggs, milk, and butter before the fasting period of Lent begins. This recipe is for the thick and spongy pancakes.



Ingredients

175g/6oz self-raising flour
1 tsp baking powder
40g/1½oz caster sugar
1 small orange, zest only optional
1 free-range egg beaten
200 ml milk
Optional - fresh blueberries or raspberries. sunflower oil, for greasing
To serve, maple syrup, lemon juice, more fresh fruit and greek yoghurt

Method

Combine the flour, baking powder, sugar and orange zest in a mixing bowl. Make a well in the centre and then add the egg and half of the milk. Beat well with a whisk until you have a smooth, thick batter.

Beat in enough of the milk to make a batter the consistency of thick pouring cream – you may not need all the milk.

Heat a large non-stick frying pan and grease with a little oil. Drop the mixture in dessertspoonfuls onto the hot pan, spacing the mixture well apart to allow space for them to spread. When bubbles appear on the surface, drop in your fruit, leave a minute, then turn the scones over with a palette knife or spatula and cook on the other side for a further 30 seconds to 1 minute, or until they are lightly golden brown.

Lift the pancakes onto a wire rack and cover with a clean tea towel to keep them soft. Cook the remaining batter in the same way. Serve with your favourite accompaniments Best served fresh from the pan with butter, maple syrup or honey. Top with yoghurt, blueberries, raspberries or other seasonal fruits, if you like



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8	4							

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Sudoku

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

Little more challenging to get those brain cells working.

Answers page 37

Brasso Club

Keeping our brasses in tip top shape Thursday 19th February

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 date: Thank you for all you do.



Henry is making a real effort for Lent – he's giving up the remote control and walking to the TV

ST BRIGID OF IRELAND



1st February is the day we remember Brigid of Ireland, for showing compassion and love. Brigid, you could say, was the female Patrick of Ireland.

Historical facts about this first abbess of Kildare (d.c. 525) may be scarce, but her 'Lives', written from the 7th century, tell many anecdotes and miracles which over the centuries have become deeply rooted in Irish folklore. Brigid came from a village near Kildare, of parents of humble origin, and is said to have been baptised by Patrick and became a nun at an early age. She is credited with founding the monastery of Kildare, a powerful influence for Christianity in Ireland.

The miracles attributed to Brigid show her to have been a woman of great compassion and generosity. There are stories of how she could multiply food, especially butter, for the poor. Other stories tell of her changing her bath water to beer, in order to satisfy the thirst of unexpected visitors. Even her cows gave milk three times the same day, to enable visiting bishops to have enough to drink.

Brigid's work grew rapidly in Ireland, where it became second only to that of Patrick. In England, there were at least 19 ancient church dedications in her honour (the most famous is St Bride's Fleet Street). There is also St Bride's Bay, Dyfed, which underlines the strong connection between Irish and Welsh Christianity. St Brigid is patron of poets, blacksmiths, and healers. She is usually depicted with a cow lying at her feet, which recalls her phase as a nun-cowgirl.

Happy Valentines day Beloved



A Simple Prayer for our Rector and his Team



At the start of 2026 we pray for the Rector, the select vestry as they lead both churches forward into the Year. Help them as they make those difficult decisions which may a times not fit well with us. Help us to be respectful of them and supportive.

We pray for all who work behind the scenes in our church services, and as counters, refreshments, flowers and so much more. We are mindful of all who keep all our groups and activities going nurturing us in our development.

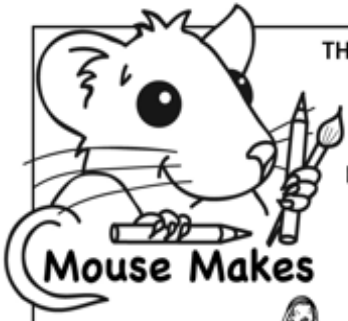
Particularly we pray for all involved in our Lent Lunches.

We ask that you keep them safe and well. Keep us mindful of their needs.

In your mercy hear our prayer

Amen.





THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Read the story in *Luke 4:1-13*



After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan where did the Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was Jesus being tempted by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into? What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him? What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do? What did Jesus say? v9

FIRST TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:
"If you are God's Son order this stone to turn into bread."

JESUS REPLIED:
*"**Man shall not live on bread alone.**"*

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:
Read the Bible
Learn God's word.

SECOND TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:
"I will give you power and wealth if you worship me."

JESUS REPLIED:
*"**Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.**"*

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:
Put God **first**
Worship *only* Him.

1



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THIRD TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:
"If you are God's Son throw yourself down, the scriptures say God will take care of you."

JESUS REPLIED:
*"**Do not put the Lord your God to the test.**"*

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

WE LEARN:
God cares, **trust**
Him do not test Him.

JESUS • BAPTISED • RIVER • JORDAN • HOLY SPIRIT • LED
WILDERNESS • DESERT • FORTY DAYS • HUNGRY • DEVIL
TEMPTATION • STONE • BREAD • WRITTEN • SON • WORLD
KINGDOMS • GLORY • WORSHIP • SERVE • GOD • HIGH
JERUSALEM • TEMPLE • SON • JUMP • DOWN • LIFT • FOOT • LORD • TEST • LENT

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How to Handle Temptation

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham considers the temptations of Christ.

Contains editor comments.

'*I can resist everything but temptation*' (Oscar Wilde). During Lent we remember Jesus' experience in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), when '*He was led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.*' (1). Temptation is a test of whether we do things our way or God's way. After 40 days of fasting Jesus was tired, hungry and vulnerable. Like Him, the Devil will attack us at our most venerable moments, especially when we are stressed.

The first temptation was to turn stones into bread:

Jesus' ministry was not about putting His own needs first, but being nourished by God's word. '*We do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*' (Deuteronomy 8:3). Like Jesus, we need to make God our priority and trust Him completely.

(Editor - The first temptation is the one I can relate to most. Just the thought of food and I want it. Then I am mindful of those here in NI and across the world who don't have enough to eat, way beyond 40 days).

The second temptation was to put God to the test:

Jumping off the Temple pinnacle would have been a dramatic way for Jesus to gain popularity, but this was not God's way! '*Do not put the Lord your God to the test.*' (Deuteronomy 6:16). We too need to learn this lesson!

(Editor - I immediately respond to the second temptation by thinking 'I would never put God to the test' and then I remember bargaining with God. 'If you help me get a certain job I will do…'

Is that putting God to the test? Have you ever put God to the test)

The third temptation was to worship Satan:

The devil took Jesus up a mountain to offer Him worldly power. In contrast, His calling as Messiah was to be marked by suffering and

honouring God. *'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'* (Deuteronomy 6:13). This is to be our experience of living for God.

(Editor- Do I have other Gods in my life, as I mentioned food, watching TV and many others. I call these minor daily practice Gods when I could spend more time instead worshipping God).

Jesus stands with us in our temptations. As we claim the promises of Scripture, like Him, we will find strength in the Spirit's power and the victory of the Cross.

(Editor Sometimes I wonder about the line in the Lord's prayer ' Lead us not into Temptation' The words of Jesus calling to his father for help around temptation. He understood and he did not give in calling to his father to help him . I pray Lord that you will strengthen me to turn away from temptation and when I don't, to turn again to you as soon as a possible. Father thank you forgiving us when we yield to temptation).

Consider these verses to help when tempted

'Watch and pray, so that you enter not into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' (Matthew 26:41)

'Since Jesus Himself has endured being tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted.' (Hebrews 2:18)

'Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tested, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

'If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest!' (Corrie Ten Boom).

Hymn Festival/Songs of Praise

22nd February 2026 at 7 pm in St Patrick's

Write your favourite hymn - either the first line of the hymn or the number in the hymn book - on a piece of paper and put it on the collection plate at Church. You may choose more than one hymn!

4th anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine war

As 24th February approaches, the statistics are grim for the fourth anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

- *Massive displacement:* 6.9 million refugees have fled Ukraine, with a further 3.7 million internally displaced.
- *Significant casualties:* Russia has hit one million casualties in all, including 250,000 soldiers killed. Ukraine has had about 53,000 casualties, including about 15,000 deaths.
- *Immense destruction* of Ukraine's infrastructure, medical facilities and educational facilities.
- *Impact:* Russia now occupies about 20% of Ukraine, including Crimea. Worldwide, a weakened global economy, threatened food security, and documented war crimes, including chemical weapons used by Russia.
- *Expense:* Billions of dollars have been given in aid to Ukraine from US and EU.

The future is unclear, but here are some memorable quotes of two leading Ukrainians: At the start of the war, when offered evacuation from Kyiv by the U.S. government, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy famously stated, **"I need ammunition, not a ride".** The following day, on 25th February he emphasised Ukraine's determination, stating: **"We will be defending our country, because our weapon is truth, and our truth is that this is our land, our country, our children, and we will defend all of this".**

The head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), **Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk** proclaims **"Ukraine is wounded, but it is not defeated! Ukraine is exhausted, but it is standing and will remain standing! Believe me, no one thinks of giving up."**

A recurring theme in Zelenskyy's speeches is that **"Life will win over death, and the light will win over darkness".**

Dear God - Please help them. ***From Parish Pump***

Winter ebbs away and Spring emerges bringing signs of hope and new life.

Wrap up warm, put on your warm coat and go in search of the snow drop, crocus, daffodils and tulips. Take a picture on your phone - send to me for March's magazine





Bible Bite

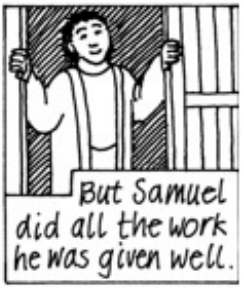
A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in 1 Samuel 2:11-17,22-25, 3:1-21

As soon as he was old enough to leave his parents, Samuel went to live at God's temple in Shiloh, with the priest, Eli..





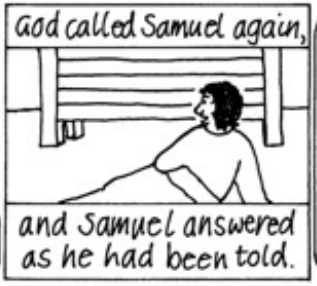




















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Story behind the hymn Forty days and Forty nights

In my search for a popular hymn associated with Lent, I came across this hymn which I had never sang before. Lots of hymns originate first as a poem and then are set to music. It was only when I found a recording that I realised I had heard it many times. I am sharing this for it's poetic value. As I read it the second verse brought me right into the desert, yet the temptation was bad but even before that, Jesus chose to be in the scorching heat in the day, then chilly nights, always at risk of dangerous animals with a stone for a pillow and earth for his bed. Then Satan turns up and he does not give up. He knows our temptation and our suffering.



Christ in the Wilderness
Ivan N. Kramskoy
(1837–1887)

Forty days and forty nights
Thou wast fasting in the wild;
Forty days and forty nights
Tempted, and yet undefiled.

Sunbeams scorching all the day;
Chilly dew-drops nightly shed;
Prowling beasts about Thy way;
Stones Thy pillow; earth Thy bed.

Should not we Thy sorrow share
And from worldly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Strong with Thee to suffer pain?

Then if Satan on us press,
Jesus, Savior, hear our call!
Victor in the wilderness,
Grant we may not faint nor fall!

So shall we have peace divine:
Holier gladness ours shall be;
Round us, too, shall angels shine,
Such as ministered to Thee.

Keep, O keep us, Savior dear,
Ever constant by Thy side;
That with Thee we may appear
At the eternal Eastertide.

The Hymn "Forty Days and Forty Nights," penned by George Hunt Smyttan in 1851, is a solemn hymn reflecting on the period of fasting and trial experienced by Jesus in the wilderness. The hymn draws directly from the Gospel accounts, emphasizing Christ's steadfastness and obedience during His forty-day fast. Through its verses, it invites believers to meditate on the discipline, endurance, and spiritual preparation exemplified by Jesus, encouraging a deeper personal commitment to prayer, fasting, and reliance on God.

The hymn paints a vivid picture of the wilderness experience, highlighting both the physical challenge and the spiritual significance of Christ's testing. Smyttan's words underscore the battle against temptation, showing how Jesus overcame the enticements of Satan not by his own strength but through dependence on Scripture and the Father's will. The imagery of hunger, solitude, and confrontation with the tempter provides a tangible context for worshippers to reflect on their own spiritual struggles.

Musically, the hymn's meter and phrasing allow congregations to sing with measured reverence, mirroring the contemplative tone of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness. Its repetitive structure reinforces the spiritual discipline of perseverance, linking the physical endurance of Jesus with the believer's call to steadfast faith.

Smyttan's hymn emphasizes that the forty days in the wilderness were not merely a time of trial but also a period of preparation for the ministry ahead. It reminds Christians that times of testing and hardship are opportunities for spiritual growth and reliance on God. The hymn's enduring appeal lies in its ability to connect the historical events of Jesus' life with timeless lessons for daily Christian living, prompting worshippers to consider how they can remain faithful amid their own trials.

In essence, "Forty Days and Forty Nights" is both a historical reflection and a devotional exhortation, celebrating Christ's triumph over temptation while encouraging believers to cultivate spiritual discipline, obedience, and trust in God. The focus on endurance, faithfulness, and divine reliance inspires worshippers, so it is a meaningful component of both liturgical and personal devotion. **(https://www.hymnallibrary.org/hymns/forty-days-and-forty-nights)**

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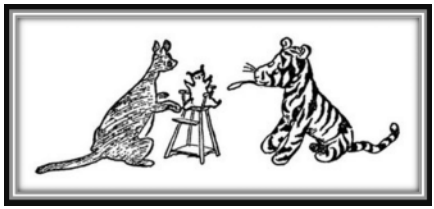
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Winnie the Pooh and Lent 2026 *By Revd Roy Shaw*

Remember the Winnie the Pooh stories? And Kanga's insistence on Baby Roo's taking his Strengthening Medicine? It's 'really quite a nice taste when you get used to it', she explained, although I'm not convinced Baby Roo always agreed.

It can be helpful to think of Lent as a sort of medicine; an opportunity to strengthen us in the things that are good, rein in other facets of our personality, and reset the compass to the true North of following Jesus. A Spring-clean of the soul, if you like.



Baby Roo (and Piglet on the occasion he was subject to it) found Strengthening Medicine not to their liking, and we may groan inwardly at the thought of 'giving up something for Lent'.

Think of what lies behind this 'giving up'. It's so that we may be strengthened, our character refined, prejudices examined, junk thrown overboard, and we may come to Passiontide and Easter fitter to walk the way of the Cross, and rise in new life with Jesus at His Resurrection.

Nor is Lent just a case of giving up chocolate. One year I gave up Facebook for Lent, having spent far too much time scrolling through it each day. It freed me to do other, more constructive things. And instead of giving up, why not take up something you've been meaning to do but never got round to; something life-affirming, something good for God.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, 18th February. Many Christians publicise their intention to keep a good Lent by being 'ashed'- the sign of the Cross on the forehead in a mixture of ash and holy oil at a service that day. The ash is the burnt remains of last year's palm crosses. Having been ashed, the intention of the 40 days of Lent is to keep a steady course closer to God, seen in the giving up of something - like chocolate - which has a hold on us. We walk with Jesus on the way to the Cross, mindful of the 'riches of God's kindness, forbearance and patience' as St Paul said, and mindful of Jesus' choice of the Cross as a way for us to enter those riches more fully.

And to face the immensity of that sacrifice, and the immensity of God's riches made available to us in Jesus, we need all the Strengthening Medicine we can get!

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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

Parish Announcements

The Select Vestry

meets on Wednesday, 11th February at 7pm
in Boucher room, St Patrick's church

Counters
February 2026

02/02/2026	Trevor Peoples
09/02/2026	Bert Thompson
16/02/2026	Valerie Kincaid
23/02/2026	Sandra Thompson

Refreshments Rota
February 2026

1/02/2026	Heather and Jon Craig
8/02/2026	Priscilla Carlisle
15/02/2026	Judith de Fleury
22/02/2026	Janet Matthews

Refreshments coordinator Priscilla Carlisle - Tel 07787561517

Game On Meeting

Meeting in the Library usually second and fourth Wednesday
-11th and 25th at
Time 1.30 pm

Some members play Mexican Train, others Backgammon.
New participants always welcome. Come and join us for tea and biscuits, even if you don't want to play.

Church Activities

Together in Faith Group

1st and 3rd Mondays in the month at 7.30 pm

2nd and 16th February

Meet in the Boucher Room, Parochial Hall
St Patrick's Church.

Book Club

Christmas Book Club - sharing Christmas Stories, poems
the last Wednesday of the month
(Contact Paddy Rodgers tel 07720 404071)

Wednesday Morning Fellowship

Second Wednesday in the month-

Next meeting 11th February in the Boucher Room.
We start with refreshments and then fellowship from 10.45 am.

Circus Skills Class

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

Indoor Bowling Club

Tuesdays from 7pm every week - Parochial Hall
St Patricks Church

New people always welcome to join in all the groups

Youth Fellowship Sunday Brunch

Feburary 1st March 1st 2026

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).



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

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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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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



"We begin again"

Is about a fresh start, reconnecting with our values. It is often linked to Christian renewal and personal hope after challenges. This theme is associated with restarting, finding meaning, or rekindling love. It is a statement of resilience, a determination to get back on the right path or find a new one, whether daily, spiritually, or relationally. The theme appears in books, and sermons and in popular music.

Beginning again is important to me. For 10 years I lived within a Christian community in Edinburgh, (The Emmaus Community of St Benedict). 'So we begin again' was the focus of life, and prayer three times a day in a little wooden chapel at the back of the house. Rooted in the Benedictine tradition, we emphasised a daily return to God and disciplined living, finding peace and structure. Since I left in 2018 when the community closed, I have missed that sense of community and order and gradually the discipline of prayer slipped and that has not been good for me.

As a counsellor, often working with Alcoholics on their recovery journey, I am familiar with the AA 12 Steps programme. Step 2 and 3 is 'turn to a higher power' whatever that maybe. Following your faith, no matter what that is, gives you a sense of peace. It allows you to believe anything could happen. In step 2, this higher power is capable of bringing us back to what is important in life so we can begin again, something we cannot do alone. I am encouraged by my clients success which they attribute to their higher power'. Like you, my higher power is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When we think we can change things ourselves, we may struggle. We get in the way of our God who loves us, wants to empower us, lead, heal and free us, wanting the best for us. Following a difficult few weeks, the need to begin again with God daily and let him work in me came to the fore.

By the time we go to print I will have been on my new journey since 3rd January and feel better for it.

Love and Blessings for 2026



Colouring in - is a great way to relax

