

The Columban

ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH, KNOCK, DECEMBER 2023 - JANUARY 2024



On to us a son is born



RECTOR'S LETTER

Dear Parishioner,

DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

I invite you to join us for our **Advent Carol Service on Sunday 3rd December at 7.00pm** as we embark on our preparations for the birth of Jesus Christ. This will be an atmospheric candlelight service which will include familiar advent hymns, anthems, readings and prayers for this season. The service will begin in a very dimly light lit church representing darkness and then the candles, which will be given to each person upon their arrival, will be lit and the church will become brighter.

This year our Advent and Christmas services are particularly poignant as there is so much darkness in the world around us. How we need to be prepared to welcome the Christ child into our lives and to get the full blessings of God's inexpressible gift to us on Christmas Day. We are deeply concerned by the recent violence in the Middle East and the continuing war in Ukraine. More locally our thoughts and prayers are with all those businesses and homes which have been damaged by the floods. We continue to pray for all those affected by the pandemic and for political stability in our province at this time of financial hardship and increased medical waiting lists for so many people.

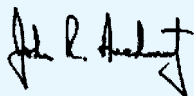
In the busyness of these weeks with its many challenges, my hope and prayer is that we can find time to attend our seasonal church services as an integral part of our preparations for Christ's birth. **How we all need to embrace afresh God's precious gift of His Son entering our world, especially this Christmas, to provide the necessary light, hope, peace, joy and love which we need to sustain us and those around us.** This is the true meaning of Christmas, and the good news is that Christ is here to stay amidst all the challenges. **However, it is our response that matters. The true benefit of a gift is in its use and application.** May we therefore share the love of God with others in practical

ways, so they too can experience the light of Christ in their darkness. **The loose cash collection at our Festival Service of Nine Lessons and Carols and Christmas services will be allocated entirely to the Dean of Belfast's Black Santa Appeal, which supports so many local charities and organisations.**

Our beautiful church building has hosted worship since it was built in 1896. **Throughout all those years, St. Columba's has proclaimed and shared the good news of Christ's birth through many difficult periods of history.** While our predecessors found much strength at such challenging times through their attendance at services, I hope you can ***Come and Join us*** to receive similar strength in the midst of current challenges. We can then begin a new year with the confidence that Christ is with us. May we also be with Him.

Caroline, Charles and Henry join me in wishing you God's richest Blessing for Christmas and throughout 2024.

Yours in His service,



PARISH PRAYER

God, our Heavenly Father, make the door of our Church wide enough to welcome all who need human love, fellowship and a Father's care; but narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and hatred. Here may the tempted find help, the sorrowing receive comfort and the penitent be assured of your mercy. And here may all your children renew their strength and go on their way in hope and joy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Bishop Thomas Ken 1637-1711



We are delighted to be selected as the venue for the BBC Radio Ulster Sunday Broadcast Service, live on Sunday 10th December.

The service will begin promptly at 10.03am and we ask that everyone is in their seats by 9.40am that morning in time for sound checks and rehearsal.

Everyone is welcome to attend this service, which will be Holy Communion.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Sunday 3rd	The First Sunday of Advent (Purple)	
8.15am	Holy Communion	
	Epistle 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9	Grace from God the Father
	Read by: Elizabeth Leonard	
	Gospel Mark 13: 24-37	The coming of the Son of Man
10.30am	All Age Worship followed by refreshments	
	Reading Mark 13: 24-37	The coming of the Son of Man
	Read by: Caroline Fairley	
7.00pm	Advent Carol Service	
Wednesday 6th		(Purple)
8.00pm	Compline Service for Advent	
Thursday 7th		(Purple)
10.30am	Holy Communion followed by refreshments	
Sunday 10th	The Second Sunday of Advent	(Purple)
8.15am	Holy Communion	
	Epistle 2 Peter 3: 8-15a	The promise of the Lord's coming
	Read by: Clergy	
	Gospel Mark 1: 1-8	The proclamation of John the Baptist
10.03am	Holy Communion (RADIO ULSTER BROADCAST SERVICE)	
	Epistle 2 Peter 3: 8-15a	The promise of the Lord's coming
	Read by: Fiona Haldane	
	Gospel Mark 1: 1-8	The proclamation of John the Baptist
	Intercessions	Patrick Good
Wednesday 13th		(Purple)
8.00pm	Compline Service for Advent	
Thursday 14th		(Purple)
10.30am	Blue Christmas Service	
Sunday 17th	The Third Sunday of Advent	(Purple)
8.15am	Holy Communion	
	Epistle 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24	Benediction
	Read by: Ronny Martin	
	Gospel John 1: 6-8, 19-28	The testimony of John the Baptist

10.30am Morning Prayer

1st Reading Isaiah 61: 1-4; 8-11 The mission to Zion

Read by: Andrew Hirst

2nd Reading John 1: 6-8, 19-28 The testimony of John the Baptist

Read by: Joy Montgomery

Occasional Prayers

Karen McAlpine

7.30PM Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Wednesday 20th

(Purple)

8.00pm Compline Service for Advent

Thursday 21st (Purple)

10.30am Holy Communion for Senior Parishioners *followed by seasonal refreshments*

Sunday 24th The Fourth Sunday of Advent

(Purple)

8.15am Holy Communion

Epistle Romans 16: 25-27 Final blessing

Read by: Clergy

Gospel Luke 1: 26-38 The birth of Jesus foretold

10.30am Holy Communion

Epistle Romans 16: 25-27 Final blessing

Read by: Ian Noad

Gospel Luke 1: 26-38 The birth of Jesus foretold

Intercessions

Karen McAlpine

11.15pm Midnight Eucharist

(White)

Epistle Hebrews 1: 1-4

Read by: Charles Auchmuty

Gospel John 1: 1-14

Monday 25th Christmas Day

(White)

10.15am Family Communion

Gospel Luke 2: 8-20

The shepherds and the angels

Read by: Emily Morrow

Thursday 28th The Holy Innocents

(White)

10.30am Holy Communion

Sunday 31st The First Sunday of Christmas

(White)

8.15am Holy Communion

Epistle Galatians 4: 4-7 God sent his Son to redeem us
Read by: Joe McKee
Gospel Luke 2: 15-21 The shepherds glorify God

10.30am CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

Reading John 1: 1-5 The Word became Flesh
Read by: Rebecca Albery

Online Services

The audio recording of our 10.30am service each Sunday can be found on our parish website www.stcolumbas.down.anglican.org under "Church Service Recordings".

DECEMBER FLOWER ROTA

SUNDAY 3rd Louise Mercer

SUNDAY 10th Barbara Laverty

SUNDAY 17th Nan Hillier

SUNDAY 24th Christmas Flowers

SUNDAY 31st David Deane

JANUARY FLOWER ROTA

SUNDAY 7th Karen Patterson

SUNDAY 14th The Launchbury Family

SUNDAY 21st Christine Johnston

SUNDAY 28th The Mason Family

SERVICES IN JANUARY

Monday 1st **The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus** **(White)**
10.30am **Holy Communion**

Thursday 4th **The Feast of the Epiphany (transferred)** **(White)**
10.30am **Holy Communion** *followed by refreshments*

Sunday 7th **The First Sunday after the Epiphany** **(White)**
The Baptism of our Lord

8.15am **Holy Communion**

Epistle Acts 19: 1-7 Paul in Ephesus

Read by: Ronny Martin

Gospel Mark 1: 4-11 The baptism of Jesus

10.30am **All Age Worship** *followed by refreshments*

Reading Mark 1: 4-11 The baptism of Jesus

Read by: Rachel Cairns

Thursday 11th **(White)**

10.30am **Holy Communion** *followed by refreshments*

Sunday 14th **The Second Sunday after the Epiphany** **(White)**

8.15am **Holy Communion**

Epistle Revelation 5: 1-10 The Scroll and the Lamb

Read by: Elizabeth Leonard

Gospel John 1: 43-51 Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael

10.30am **Holy Communion**

Epistle Revelation 5: 1-10 The Scroll and the Lamb

Read by: Moranne Noad

Gospel John 1: 43-51 Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael

Intercessions Helen Armstrong

Thursday 18th **(White)**

10.30am **Holy Communion** *followed by refreshments*

Sunday 21st **The Third Sunday after the Epiphany** **(White)**

8.15am **Holy Communion**

Epistle 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31 Time is short

Read by: Patrick Good

Gospel Mark 1: 14-20 The beginning of the Galilean
 ministry

10.30am Morning Prayer *followed by refreshments hosted by Mums & Tots*
 1st Reading Jonah 3: 1-5, 10 Conversion of Nineveh
 Read by: Joyce Stevenson
 2nd Reading Mark 1: 14-20 The beginning of the Galilean ministry
 Read by: Esther Templeton
 Occasional Prayers Clergy

Thursday 25th The Conversion of St. Paul (White)

10.30am Holy Communion *followed by refreshments*

Sunday 28th The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany (White)

The Presentation of Christ

8.15am Holy Communion

Epistle 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13 Food offered to Idols

Read by: Joe McKee

Gospel Mark 1: 21-28 The man with an unclean Spirit

10.30am Holy Communion

Epistle 1 Corinthians 8: 1-13 Food offered to Idols

Read by: Martin Moore

Gospel Mark 1: 21-28 The man with an unclean Spirit

Intercessions Heather Brehcist

Online Services

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From the Registers

Our Sorrows

Funeral Services

30th October Brian Stanley Crothers

Clergy Parish Visiting

It is always a great privilege for the clergy to visit parishioners in their homes. If you would like to request a clergy visit, please telephone the Rector (028 9047 1514) or Canon Walter Laverty (028 9573 8743). In addition to requested Parish Visiting, the clergy will be visiting parishioners in the following districts during January:

Rector

Malone Hill Park
Manse Road
Martinez Avenue
Massey Green
Mill Pond Court Road

Canon Laverty

Manna Grove
Massey Avenue
Massey Court
Massey Park
Motelands, Old Holywood

PASTORAL SUPPORT



The clergy would appreciate being informed if parishioners are in hospital, are being transferred or if they have been discharged, and will be pleased to offer them pastoral support. *Please do not assume that they already know this information.*

Please telephone the Rector (028 9047 1514) to enable him to take careful notes of the details.

Thank you.

A little reminder...

New church envelopes for 2024 were delivered to every house in October along with your Columban magazine. Please make sure that all donations for 2023 are received by Sunday 31st December. Any received after this date will be allocated to your 2024 giving.



Please make sure that following your final donation for 2023, any OLD envelopes are destroyed as they are no longer valid. Thank you.

Your Christmas Gift to St. Columba's

In December, white envelopes are in your box of church envelopes to make a final Christmas Gift to the parish.

This year, we will be using the white envelopes towards our Building Fund so that we can tidy up any outstanding issues within our beautiful church building and make further improvements to the church fabric for future years.

Thank you for all of your incredible financial support during 2023, and for your loyal support of the ministry of St Columba's. **Wishing you and your loved ones a peaceful and blessed Christmas.**

Karen Patterson

Parish Administrator & Financial Giving Secretary

God's Gift of
Christmas is
Forever



Church hall cleaning rota

December 9th Joyce Stevenson and Yvonne Robb

December 23rd Christine and Ian Johnston

January 6th Nan Hillier and Isobel McDowell

January 20th Fiona and Robin Haldane

February 3rd Jayne and Ronnie Martin

February 17th Clare and Jim Best

A very Happy Christmas and New Year

Nan



MARMALADE

The sales of marmalade raised this year was £450.00. The Rector agreed to a donation of £100.00 to Christian Aid, and a donation of £50.00 to Cambodia Missions.

The remaining £300.00 went to church funds. Since starting in 2019 the total money raised is **£2068.00**. I wish to thank everyone for their support.

Unfortunately the price of marmalade will have to increase in January to £3 50.

Maureen



Thought for the Month

While I walked through Stormont a few weeks ago with Ned, the best four legged friend a man could hope for, deep in my Friday afternoon thoughts, my phone's ring brought me back to earth with a shudder. My friend an old GP trainer from Strabane twenty odd years ago was ringing to tell me that John had died a few hours earlier. "I know you two kept in touch" he said "I thought you should know."



Richard Whiteside

As we reminisced fondly about John, I was once again reminded of the profound and enduring impact he had on my career and I suppose my life, so I thought I'd tell you about John.

Dr John Gallagher was the senior partner in my training practice in Strabane and my first year full time in General Practice coincided with his last before retirement; we talked a lot.

John Gallagher was a Donegal island man, born and raised in Aranmore off the coast into the family that ran the Island's post office and pub. One of the first islanders to win a scholarship to Grammar School on the mainland, he had to learn English as his second language before he could attend boarding school in Sligo. From there he won a scholarship to medical school at UCD and at finals finished second, pipped at the post only by the future Professor of Cardiology at UCLA in California. Not the bright lights of America or Dublin for John and instead he headed back to the north west with his wife, Phyllis, and 2 daughters to serve the community of Strabane faithfully and passionately for the next forty years.

You couldn't help but warm to John and everyone did. He was small of stature, softly spoken and looked like your grandfather but simply unparalleled in compassion, patience and good humour never mind his academic genius. He was the busiest and most sought-after GP by some margin and yet always seemed to have unlimited time and patience to let you pick his brains, benefit from his experience or just have a chat. His patients simply adored him as did the wider Strabane community and at his funeral a few days later I had never before witnessed such an outpouring of love, respect and thanks for a life of service to them all.



I remember battling with him one morning to let me help him with the list of 9 housecalls he was heading out to do over his lunch. He begrudgingly allocated me one of his calls and I can still see the look of disappointment on the old lady's face when I appeared at her door instead of John. She needn't have worried, he

turned up anyway just in case I needed a hand!!

I asked him one day what motivated him, what kept him so energetic in this caring role after forty years. He looked at me with those kind benevolent eyes, thought for a bit and said "Richard, we are in such a privileged position for such a short time, we just have to give it our best shot every single day because it'll be over all too soon."

Rest easy John.

Our sincere thanks to Richard for sharing this 'Thought' with us.

The February 'Thought for the Month' will be written by Martin Moore.



During this time of preparation for Christmas, the world can feel empty and sad for many people. The wars and unrest across the world, the changes to the climate, the cost of living, and many other news headlines can deepen the sense of loss and loneliness. Adding in the change of season to shorter

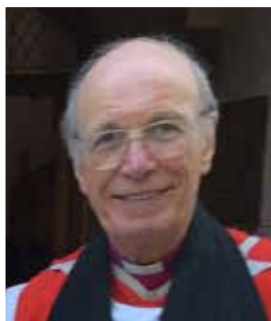
days and darker nights feeling longer, the pressure can sometimes feel over-whelming. This is further exacerbated by the loss of a family member or friend, making it a difficult time for some people.

Blue Christmas is a service of comfort and reflection. It is a way in which we can recognize the depth of worry or sadness and help process those negative feelings of loss or grief. By doing so, we can embrace the love and light of Christ, and make our peace with our circumstances. It provides us with hope for the future and comfort in knowing that we are not alone in our pain or suffering.

Everyone is welcome – bring along friends or family members if you wish, and help to make peace with your sadness, grief or worry.

Join us on Thursday 14th December at 10.30am for our Blue Christmas Service.

The Right Reverend Dr. Gordon McMullan



It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Bishop Gordon McMullan on Sunday 15th October.

Bishop McMullan had many associations with St. Columba's where he served firstly as Curate from 1969 – 1971 and then as Rector from 1976 – 1980. During his incumbency of our parish, he also served as Archdeacon of Down from 1979 – 1980. He moved from the Rectory to Clogher diocese upon his election

as Bishop in 1980. Six years later he returned to Down and Dromore as Bishop in 1986 where he served until his retirement in 1997. Bishop McMullan and his family renewed their links with St. Columba's as the See House resides in the boundaries of our parish.

Bishop McMullan ordained me as Deacon in Dromore Cathedral in June 1992 and the following year he ordained me Priest. Throughout those years I well remember our Post Ordination Training sessions which took place in the See House where Bishop McMullan and his wife Kathleen warmly welcomed us to their home.

I valued his practical advice and pastoral care to me over the years. This was particularly the case when my Rector in St. Mark's, Dundela, The Venerable James Moore was elected Bishop of Connor in 1995. Bishop McMullan kept in regular contact with me throughout the vacancy.

It was always a delight to welcome Bishop McMullan back to St. Columba's in his retirement where he preached on a number of occasions and then joined us in the Rectory.

I convey our prayers and sympathy to his sons Stephen, Philip and their families.

The Rector

COMPLINE FOR ADVENT SERVICES



Throughout this penitential season of Advent there will be a service of Compline each Wednesday at 8pm in St. Columba's. This will be a timely opportunity for us to pause from the noise and busyness of these days. I am very pleased that Bishop Alan Abernethy will be joining us for some of these short and reflective services. Bishop Alan is familiar to us as he has conducted Lent services here in St Columba's and I am looking forward to welcoming him back to our parish.

Bishop Alan writes, "Advent is often missed because of the busyness of preparing for Christmas. However, it is a beautiful reminder of how we prepare for the arrival of Jesus. We look forward to the second coming and we prepare again for the word becoming flesh at Christmas."

I believe we can experience "Advent Moments" everyday as we can recognise God in the everyday events. This advent I suggest we examine three words as part of our preparation: waiting, listening and watching. Waiting is not something we find easy in a culture where so much is immediate. Waiting engages our mind and heart. Listening is a decision and an active engagement. This engages our ears. Watching is about having our eyes open to the prompting of the Spirit in the everyday.

We will reflect on these three words as part of our celebrating the advent season. Please consider taking time to wait, listen and watch in this Advent season."

Compline is known as "Night Prayer" service, and is the English word is derived from the Latin **completorium**, as compline is the completion of the waking day. It is a final prayer liturgy of the day which emphasises spiritual peace.

The services will begin at 8.00pm on Wednesday 6th, 13th and 20th December, and I invite you to join us as we prepare for the Christmas season of worship.

THE RECTOR



Black Santa Appeal

Our loose plate collections for the following services will be allocated to the Black Santa Appeal at Belfast Cathedral:

Sunday 17th December

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday 24th December

**8.15am & 10.30am Holy Communion,
11.15pm Midnight Eucharist**

Monday 25th December

10.15am

Family Communion

All the money gathered is donated to local charities with a proportion given to Christian Aid.

For 2023, the Black Santa Appeal will have a special focus support on those local charities which:

1. Support the most disadvantaged families and individuals in our community at this time of the continuing "cost of living crisis"
2. Work with those most impacted by drug abuse in Northern Ireland
3. Provide bereavement support services in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic.

However, the Black Santa Appeal continues to accept applications from a very wide range of charities at work in Northern Ireland, including: those working with refugee communities; those caring for children, youth and the elderly; the improvement of employment opportunities for young people and a host of small charities which cannot afford paid fund-raisers.

Please support this work as generously as you can during this season of goodwill to all. Thank you.

PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD

This year, our Parish Christmas card depicts a family of penguins standing under a shining star, with a nativity scene inside the star.

This brightly shining star and the penguins symbolises that Christianity is world-wide, reaching far into sparsely populated areas of the globe, not just in developed areas. The light of hope shines brightly for those who wish to embrace it, so that no matter where you are in the world, Christ is with us. The nativity scene reminds us of the gift of Jesus, born in a cold stable, with his family ready to face the world together.



The penguins are huddled together, indicating a strength and warmth that we can receive from each other as a church family. The penguins are black and white, which contrasts darkness and light, and the beautiful star provides them with brilliance in their hours of darkness. Battling freezing storms and high winds, it is only by standing together that they can overcome adversity. We too must stand firm together, facing our own storms in life, but always knowing that God's love for us and our own Christian faith in Him can help us overcome the darkness of the world, and His light will sustain us and provide us hope for the future.

I thank the Art Club for the submission of their work for consideration, and especially thank Billy McAlpine for his delightful and inspirational artwork which was selected for our Parish Christmas Card this year.

THE RECTOR

Prayers for your thoughts and comfort



One topic which features regularly at present is that of climate change. No longer are warnings about the danger of global warming dismissed out of hand. Incessant rain and the frequency of gale force winds demonstrate the fact that we cannot afford to be complacent if we care about our universe and the consequences of our actions for future generations. By coincidence, as the leaves are driven from the trees in the final days of autumn, I've heard someone comment on the radio that if the human race is to have a future, then we must 'turn over a new leaf'.

What is the origin of that idiom? The leaf does not refer to a leaf on a tree, but to the pages in a book. In the 16th Century the pages of a book were referred to as leaves. To turn over a new leaf suggests a re-evaluation of our own attitudes and behaviour.

There are many opportunities in the next two months when we can resolve to turn over a new leaf. Examples include Advent – the beginning of a new Church Year: Christmas, with its message of peace and goodwill: a new calendar year in January when we can make positive and maybe lasting resolutions to 'do better': Christian Unity Week when we can focus on the things that unite us as Christians.

Hopefully, as we resolve to turn over a new leaf, the prayer material on these pages will help, as we focus on the challenges facing us in a troubled and divided world, to see each day as an opportunity for a new beginning.

A Thought for Advent

Keep us Lord while we tarry on this earth, in a serious seeking after you, and in walking with you every day of our lives, so that when you come, we may be found, not hiding our talent, not yet asleep and ill prepared, but waiting and longing for you, with whom we will stay for ever and ever. **Amen**
(Adapted from 17th.C prayer)

A Thought for Christmas

God of love, open the hearts and minds of many this Christmas, to the good news of Jesus Christ, that those whose lives are insecure or empty or aimless, may find in the one born in Bethlehem, and through us His disciples, all that they need for today. We ask it in His name. **Amen**

A Thought for the New Year

God of all time, who makes all things new, as we begin to take our first steps into the future where nothing is safe or certain, hold our hands as we journey onwards. May our dream of 'shalom' when all will be peace, be our guiding star. **Amen**

A Thought for Epiphany

O God, who guided the wise men to the worship of the infant Jesus, we pray that you will lead the wise, and the great and the humble of every nation to a realisation that in you, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. **Amen**

A Thought for Christian Unity Week 18th -25th January

Heavenly Father. in whose eyes the Church is one, in spite of human prejudice and intolerance, give to us, your disciples, such regret for our divisions, such love for one another, and such devotion to your service, that we may find again our unity in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Christmas Prayers

Help us Lord, to understand and share with our hearts and minds in the profound mystery of Christmas. We live in a fearful and divided world which seeks your peace and which you alone can give us. At moments when we walk in darkness, help us to see that great light which enlightens everyone who comes into the world. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Nativity Prayer of St. Augustine ca400

Let the just rejoice for their justifier is born
Let the sick rejoice for their Saviour is born
Let the captives rejoice for their Redeemer is born
Let freemen rejoice for their Liberator is born
Let all Christians rejoice for Jesus Christ is born.

A Christmas Blessing

May love come alive within your heart
As Christmas time draws near
May hope fill each room you decorate
And bring joy to those you hold dear
May peace be present at every meal
And faith ring through every day
For Christ is alive, the light of the world
To bless you all the way. **Source Anon.**

Grace before meals

Suitable at Christmas and other times

To God who gives our daily bread
A thankful song we raise
And pray that He who sends our food
May fill our hearts with praise. **Amen**

Lord, for food in a world where many hunger
For faith in a world where many walk in fear
For friends in a world where many walk alone
We give you thanks. **Amen**

A prayer for family and friends

God our Father, we thank you for our homes, our families and our friends: for laughter and sorrow shared: for the knowledge of your presence in good times and bad. As we think of our loved ones nearby and in other places and countries who are unable to be with us at Christmas, bind us together in love in your name. **Amen**

A Prayer for Choirs and all who lead worship

Almighty God, who has ordained that the hearts of men and women shall be kindled by music, and their minds attuned to understand thy divine mysteries. Grant, we pray, that all who lead worship in word and song may know themselves to be serving thee, and that the hearts of all who hear may be lifted up unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen** 19th Century prayer

Prayer for Justice and Peace

God of all creation, as we agonise over the suffering and misery of many people in areas of the Middle East, Ukraine and elsewhere, let hatred be turned into love, fear into trust and despair into hope. In ways beyond our comprehension, may oppression be transformed into freedom and occupation into liberation, that violent encounters may cease and peace and justice prevail. We ask it in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Some days of significance in December and January

You may wish to note the following in your diary and use the appropriate prayer in your Prayer Book as follows:-

St. Stephen 26th December The first Christian martyr. Read Acts 7

St. John the Evangelist 27th December. Thank God for St. John's Gospel

The Innocent Day 28th December - read St. Luke 2 verse 16. The abuse of children in every age

The Naming of Jesus 1st January. Honour his name as a baptised Christian

The Conversion of St. Paul 25th January - read Acts 9 verses 1 to 9

Finally – A Thought for all seasons

Trust in God. Let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things pass but God never changes. Patience achieves all for which it strives. They who have God find that they lack nothing. God alone suffices.

A Christmas Reflection - Canon Ken Smyth

Many readers will be familiar with the words:- 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.' It is the beginning of a passage in the Old Testament in the book Ecclesiastes. I've heard the passage read on many occasions at weddings and funeral services. As I sat down to write this reflection I was dismayed to hear one of the political leaders in the horrendous Israeli-Gazan conflict make the following statement, quoting from Ecclesiastes:-

'There is a time for war, and a time for peace. "Now' he concluded 'is a time for war.'

Thousands of people have been slaughtered by fanatical acts of terrorism and indiscriminate bombing. The terror and anguish experienced by people in that conflict is unimaginable. The problem in that area of the Middle East seems intractable. We must continue to pray that a means can be found to prevent endless suffering and death. Of course, it is not the only bleak place at present in our world. Nearer home, our thoughts must continue to focus on the plight of the people of Ukraine, including those who have sought sanctuary in our country.

The land known as Palestine, which includes the state of Israel has experienced unrest and violence for thousands of years. Jesus was born into a world of religious and political upheaval. We are reminded in the days after Christmas of the slaughter of innocent children by Herod. Sadly, that is the real world in which we live. I am reminded of the words of Jonathan Swift who stated that 'we have enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.'

On the eve of the outbreak of World War 2, a Hindu philosopher lamented that 'if the great religions of the world continue to waste their time in a fratricidal war, instead of looking at themselves as friendly partners in the supreme task of nourishing the spiritual life of mankind, the advance of secular humanism is assured.' There is more than a grain of truth in that assertion.

The symbol of our faith – the Cross – was an instrument of brutality, torture and death. But the Cross for us is a symbol of love and forgiveness.

Christmas is an important festival with its message of peace and reconciliation. As we focus on the traditional story of the birth of Jesus, it is evident that, in these difficult and challenging times, the invitation to receive the heavenly gift is issued to rich and poor alike – to the shepherds in their poverty and simplicity : to the wise men in their wealth and sophistication. Although they arrived separately, the shepherds and wise men are cheek by jowl in the nativity scenes. The rich and poor are given revelation that, at the heart of reality, in the middle of the manger, is God. The basis of togetherness and of relationships healed, is the recognition that all people are recipients of God's many gifts, but supremely the gift of God's own self!

Jenny and I are looking forward to spending Christmas with family, including our new grandchild Rex.

Whatever your circumstances may be at present, may you celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Peace in the knowledge that Jesus is the Light of the World.



Holy Communion for Senior Parishioners

in St. Columba's Parish Church

on Thursday 21st December at 10.30am

With Christmas carols and seasonal refreshments

Everyone welcome.

CONGRATULATIONS!



Chicago Marathon is one of six Marathon Majors alongside Berlin, Boston, London, New York and Tokyo. The Majors attract tens of thousands of participants every year, from elite athletes who will finish in a little over two hours to those who will take (or exceed) the full six to seven hours allowed to complete the distance. Securing entry to a Major can be as challenging as the run itself – for most, this will be via a charity place (with a significant fund-raising target) or the coveted ballot where chances of success are less than 5% for some events.

Though I was fortunate to get a ballot place for the 2019 London Marathon, when a friend mentioned the Chicago 2023 ballot I thought 'why not – sure I won't get in anyway'. But it turns out the odds for Chicago are somewhat better than London and a few weeks later we had both secured an entry for Chicago 2023.

Marathon training is tough. Four or five runs a week over an 18-week period a week requires a lot of organisation and support from those around you, but training went well until our holiday in August when the temptation of a Sicilian parkrun led to a fall, and to cuts, bruises and a swollen knee that took several weeks to recover. But, with a combination of stubbornness and stupidity, I only missed a few runs and was back on plan by the end of the month.

At this stage the weekly long runs are exactly that – long, and with blisters, sore ankles and tight calves, I began to question my ability to complete the marathon distance. But with the last long run (20 miles) in the bag, we were soon on our way to Chicago.

At 6am on 8th October we set off in darkness for the journey 'downtown' and, along with some 48,000 others, we made our way to the start in Grant Park. Conditions were perfect for running and the atmosphere was incredible with supporters lining the entire 26.2-mile loop which weaves through 29 of Chicago's neighbourhoods. After almost five hours I crossed the finish line back in Grant Park and made my way through the finish funnel collecting the all-important medal and other recovery aids including a much needed foil blanket, water, banana and a Goose Island beer in a specially commissioned "finishers' can"!

Time for sightseeing was limited as we flew back to Dublin on the Tuesday morning but from what I did see, Chicago is a great place and one I will look forward to visiting again – next time, without having to train for 18 weeks!

Gillian Sadlier



Our children's Christmas Party will take place in
Campbell College Junior School on

**Saturday 2nd December, from
3pm-4.30pm.**

Come along for some fun and games, scaven-
ger hunt, picnic, and

*meet the very special visitor
from the North Pole!*

***Adults: please speak to a leader or Sunday
School teacher to see what you need to do.
Please bring along your picnic and a bag for
your rubbish. Thank you.***



CHRISTIAN AID

Recently I attended a Christian Aid event entitled ***Cost of Giving : Remaining outwardly focused in a time of crisis.***

This was a most informative and thought provoking event and I wish to share a few of the main points with you:

- the Covid 19 pandemic followed by the Russian / Ukrainian war has resulted in economic insecurity for EVERYONE in society - this includes community groups, churches and charities
- many volunteers did not return after covid which adversely affects what community groups /charities can offer
- financial giving to charities such as Christian Aid has declined as a result of the cost of living crisis , however the number of world disasters have increased

We can easily become overwhelmed by the economic situation but the message we took from the meeting was that if we all could do one small thing each it would of great help, e.g. volunteer in food bank /charity shop, or give a Christian Aid charity gift available from caid.ie/CharityGifts .

Christian Aid week may only happen once a year, but the charity requires our help throughout the year. You can find magazines and leaflets about Christian Aid at the back of the church that you are welcome to take.

Joyce

PAUSE

Pause met yesterday at Hillmount Garden Centre. The weather was fine and a group of 28 parishioners and friends met for coffee. We were all glad to be out (without an umbrella) to meet with others and chat. We stayed so long that some had a second cup of coffee!

The last meeting of PAUSE in 2023 will be on:

Tuesday 5th December at Neill's Hill for tea/coffee and scones at 10.30am.

In January we are meeting on two occasions.

Tuesday 9th January at The Poet for tea/coffee and scones at 10.30am.

Tuesday 23rd January at Hillmount Garden Centre at 10.30am.

If you are free on one or all of these dates please come along. All are welcome. Bring a friend as well.

If you require further details or help with transport please contact me.

Eileen (02890203684)



The kits generously donated and packed by members will offer support to those experiencing the trauma of a miscarriage in the A&E Department of a local hospital.

A card is added to each pack with the words "Given in Love" and on the other side Donated by the Mothers' Union.

Thank you everyone.

We had a most enjoyable evening in November learning about art and drawing. The 36 folk who attended all enjoyed the practical exercises, indeed many would like to try more. Thank you to Roy for an excellent presentation and the encouragement. Thanks also to David Deane for operating the sound system.

Our December meeting will be in the parish hall on Tuesday 5th December at 8.00

For this event we want to highlight and support talent and businesses in our locality. Come browse the goods, engage in a little shopping and enjoy a glass of seasonal punch and festive treats. Take a few minutes to relax with friends before it gets busy!!

All are welcome.

Business represented include:

Add Hope Designs, Miglio Jewellery, Belmont Larder Artisan Produce, Murphy & Bailey Gifts for Pets, The Book Well, Mothers Union Shop and crafts from the parish.

Donated gifts from McKee's Farm Shop, Hillmount Nursery, Secret Garden.

More information about these and other events will be displayed on the church noticeboard.

May we wish you all a blessed Christmas and happy New Year.

Barbara



Helen, Angela, and Barbara giving kits to Mavis Thompson Diocesan President.



Maureen, Roy and Christine



January Meeting

Last year Ruth McCartney and Linda Roulston accompanied a group of girls from Methodist College Belfast to sing at the Coronation of King Charles III. On Tuesday 23 January 8.00pm in the church they are going to share that once in a lifetime experience with us.

Are very welcome

Ladies Guild Notes December/January



It was lovely to come together last month for a 'cinema experience' in the spacious new area of our church. We are grateful to David Deane who acted as our technician for the afternoon as we enjoyed a film which had many familiar faces in the cast list – echoes of 'Downton Abbey' were evident.

At our annual Christmas lunch in Shandon Park Golf Club to be held on 12th December we look forward to welcoming a large attendance of our members and guests, in addition to the Rector and some Mothers' Union members.

Our January meeting (weather permitting) will welcome a representative from the Consumer Council to speak on topics relating to various concerns dealing with our personal security when shopping or using our mobile phones, computers etc.

As we approach the end of 2023 I want to thank members for their continuing support for the Guild and wish you and your families all the blessings of this Christmas Season and every good wish for the year ahead.

Eleanor

Stuck for a Christmas Gift idea?




Copies of our beautiful parish book pictured above are still available to purchase for £10 at the back

of church each Sunday. The inspirational pictures of the gorgeous stained-glass windows are of great interest to many people.

A perfect gift for friends, neighbours or family, or even for your own personal use, this book explains the stories behind each of the beautiful windows. Get your copy while stocks last!



In the glow of the lamp



The lamp in the stable,
Glowed gently that night,
And above, in the darkness,
One star shone so bright,
The warm smell of cattle,
The sweet scent of hay,
And there, in a manger,
A small baby lay,
The lamplight was gentle,
As smoke wisps unfurled,
But this precious child,
Is the light of the world.

Eileen Hay

(People's Friend magazine)

LADIES BADMINTON

Tuesday morning Ladies badminton has resumed and we are very thankful to be back playing again. We would be really pleased to welcome new members of all ages and abilities. Perhaps there are some new mums still on leave— there are plenty of grannies only too willing to mind the little ones while you play! Or maybe you are working from home and would like some time out. We are a very happy group and there is always lots of laughter and coffee and biscuits between games. So please come and give it a try we play between 10 and 12 (and we have racquets so don't feel you have to buy one —yet! Looking forward to seeing you

Gillian



A Christmas Reflection

Canon Walter Laverty

By the time you read this, Christmas preparations will be well on the way and food preparations are always high on the list! Every year there seem to be more and more mouth-watering delicacies on offer! Yet some are rather simple. Take for instance, bread. In different parts of the world, special types of bread are used as a seasonal treat. In Germany, there is the traditional stollen filled with dried fruit, nuts, and marzipan, In Italy, panettone, a yeast leavened bread made from raisins and candy fruit peels. In Greece, the Christmas loaf is flavoured with different spices to reflect the spices the Wise Men brought to the infant Christ.

As we think of our religious celebrations, our thoughts point us to Bethlehem where Christ was born. At first the Wise Men were led to Jerusalem because that is where one expects a king to be born! However, when Herod hears this, he enquires where this child is to be born. He is told that Bethlehem is the place according to prophesy. The problem was that Bethlehem was the least place to expect the promised Messiah. What was overlooked was the fact that the little town of Bethlehem meant "House of Bread" and its significance is traced back to the lovely story of Ruth and Boaz in the Old Testament.

The theme of bread runs right through the whole of scripture with some important moments in history. In Exodus we read about the unleavened bread eaten in haste at the Passover. Then when the Israelites cross the Red Sea God sustained them on Manna in the wilderness.

In the New Testament, Jesus feeds the hungry crowds with the five loaves and the two fish. Such was the impact that miracle had on the disciples that it is the only one recorded in all four accounts of the gospel! Leading on from that, St John's gospel account devotes the entire chapter to the teaching of Jesus about the "Bread of Life". In this chapter, Jesus makes the astonishing claim:

"I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never hunger" (John 6.35)

This statement was the cause of great confusion among the Jews who took everything literally and complained because he said that he was the bread that came down from heaven. Such was a Messianic claim.

As we approach Christmas with all its food and festivity; let us stop for a moment to think that in that little town of Bethlehem (the House of Bread) the living bread came down from heaven.

During the Christmas season we shall be given plenty of opportunities to kneel before the Altar of God and, with hand outstretched, to receive the bread of the world given for us. The most solemn moment for that would be at the Midnight Christmas Eucharist.

One of my favourite communion hymns is the hymn “Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour”. However, there is a verse in the English hymnal which is not included in our hymn book for some reason. It reads:

“Though the lowliest form doth veil thee,

As of old in Bethlehem

Here as there thine angels hail thee,

Bread of heaven of Jesse’s stem,

Alleluia, Alleluia.

We in worship join with them”.

Barbara and Mark join with me in wishing you and yours a joyful Christmas and a peaceful new year.

Walter

THANK YOU!

As we approach the end of this calendar year, I thank our Columban editor, Billy McAlpine who is so well supported by his wife Ann for all their tremendous support and dedicated hard work throughout 2023.

The Columban is an essential part of our effective parish communication which keeps us all fully informed of all our monthly church services and activities. How the monthly deadlines come around so quickly! No sooner has one edition of the Columban been printed and distributed than work has already started on the next edition!

I know from my regular pastoral visiting just how much the Columban is valued and appreciated by parishioners and members of the community. However, the Columban would not be the fine publication that it is where it not for the most engaging articles which parishioners write month on month and for the great professional work done by our Graphic Designer Mike Fee and all the team at MADcolour.

Our Parish Administrator, Karen Patterson supplies many of the articles about key aspects of parish life together with labelling and collating all magazine bundles for our faithful team of distributors who ensure that you receive your copy of the Columban within a few days of the Columban being printed.

I thank all those who are involved in the preparation, printing, and distribution of the Columban. They, individually and collectively, contribute so much to the effective running of St. Columba’s.

The Rector

Railway and Model Club

With our new year upon us we are preparing to complete our existing work on various layouts. This is in preparation for the upcoming revamp of the very first layout made by the club.....years ago !

During the club's existence, we have gained a lot of experience and have a lot of ideas we now want to create in model form. This will need the efforts of all members to complete the rebuild of our very first 00 gauge layout. All the new ideas, combined with the experience we have accumulated, to produce a new layout.....a club sized product. An exciting project which we will hopefully complete over the coming year.

If you would like to see the progress for yourselves, we would be very happy to have you visit the club, some Monday afternoon, between 2.30 pm and 4.00pm The chat and banter is nonstop, and we will even supply tea and biscuits (Rocky's?)

Even better, if there are any big youngsters out there, who would like to get involved in this project, why not come down to the hall and join in. Don't worry if you have no model building experience, you can always join in the chat.

Hope to see some of you, male or female, sometime soon. You have the times and you know the venue, so come on down!

Rockie.



FEBRUARY PARISH MAGAZINE

Any articles or photographs for publication in the **February** parish magazine should be handed or emailed to the editor, **Billy McAlpine**, by **Wednesday, 10th January**.

His contact details are:-

10 Old Quay Court, Holywood BT18 0HT
Tel: **9042 4390** Email: **colmaged@outlook.com**

We all love to see photographs of people enjoying our Church activities. So we can all benefit fully from this and for reproduction purposes, it is very important that photographs are clear and in focus.

Many thanks

PARISH FINANCES - A YEAR END CHECKLIST

As we approach the end of another year, the Select Vestry would like to take this opportunity to thank parishioners sincerely for their continued financial support throughout 2023. Without that support, St Columba's would not be able to flourish, to grow or to be the beacon that it is across the Parish and beyond. As the year now draws to a close, there are a number of points you may wish to check:



I have donated all my intended 2023 contributions before Sunday 31st December 2023. Parishioners are reminded that any financial contributions for the 2023 year **must** be received by Sunday 31st December 2023. Any contributions received after that date will be allocated to the 2024 year.



If I am a UK taxpayer I have completed a Gift Aid form. Any UK taxpayers who have not already completed a Gift Aid form are reminded to do so. Gift Aiding means that the Parish can claim up to a further 25% of the value of contributions at no additional cost to the parishioner.



I contribute to Parish funds by Standing Order. The Select Vestry is very grateful for all financial contributions regardless of how those are made and is mindful of personal preference regarding the means of contributing. Nonetheless, the majority of parishioners now contribute to Parish funds by Standing Order. This is the preferred method for regular giving as it is secure, cost effective and attracts lower bank charges than cash or cheque equivalents.

If you require either Gift Aid or Standing Order forms, please contact Karen in the Parish Office Phone: 028 90 656891 or e-mail: office@coiknock.org, or download from our parish website:

<http://www.stcolumba's@down.anglican.org> under the "giving" tab.

Thank you again for your continued support.

Brian Acheson (Honorary Treasurer)

Victor Dukelow (Assistant Honorary Treasurer)

PARISH ORGANISATIONS


New members are always welcome at any of our organisations!

Sunday	Sunday School <i>Junior nursery to P5 Senior P6 and over</i>	2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Sundays at 10.30am	Superintendent: Lynn Ryan 07955 479065
	Crèche	2 nd , 4 th and 5 th Sundays	Lindsay Rothwell 07710 590574
Monday	Craft and Hobby Circle	1 st and 3 rd Monday each month 10.30am	Carol Willis 9079 9997
	Railway and Model Club	2.00pm	David Beattie 9028 5868
	MU Afternoon Group	2 nd Monday each month 2.30pm	Joy Montgomery 9029 5427
	Mens' Club	7.30pm	John Robb 9058 1438
Tuesday	Ladies Badminton	10-00am - 12 Noon	Gillian Popplestone 07730479478
	Ladies Guild	3 rd Tuesday each month 2.30pm in the church	Eileen Anderson 9020 3684
	Activity Group	Except 1 st Tuesday 7.30pm	Maureen Irwin 9079 5155
	Mothers' Union	1 st Tuesday each month 8.00pm	Barbara Lavery 9573 8743
Wednesday	Bible Study Group	2.30pm - 4.00pm	Eileen Anderson 9020 3684
Thursday	Art Club	9.30am	Vida Shaw 90655063
	Choir	7.30pm	Dr Joe McKee 07976 294574
Friday	Mums and Tots	10.00am	Joyce Stevenson, 9058 3381
Bi-monthly	Pause	As arranged	Eileen Anderson 9020 3684
Monthly	Youth Etc. <i>(11-15 years)</i>	As arranged	Jonathan Martin, 07980 885990
	Young Families	Social events as arranged	Rachel Stewart 07812 247343

WHO'S WHO IN ST. COLUMBAS

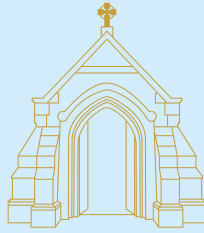
Parish website: www.stcolumbas.down.anglican.org

Rector	The Reverend Chancellor John R Auchmuty	St. Columba's Rectory 29 Kings Road BT5 6JG 028 9047 1514 rectorknock@down.anglican.org
Assistant Priests	The Reverend Canon Ken Smyth The Reverend Canon Walter Laverty	3 Mount Royal Bangor BT20 3BG 028 9145 8706 6 Hanwood Heights Dundonald BT16 1XU 028 9573 8743
Diocesan Lay Reader	Karen McAlpine	readercolumba@gmail.com
Rector's Churchwarden	Dr. Richard Whiteside	07747 616105
People's Churchwarden	Louise Mercer	07742 113519
Rector's Glebewarden	David Kelly	07730 468684
People's Glebewarden	Ian Johnston	07850 999909
Honorary Sexton	John Proctor	028 9087 0526
Assistant Honorary Sexton	Geoff Launchbury	028 9028 1204 07814 498 241
Select Vestry	Rector, Churchwardens, Glebewardens, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, Assistant Hon. Treasurer, David Craig, Andrew Hirst, John Kerr, Martin Moore, Nigel Morrow, Scott Rutherford, Gillian Sadlier, Jim Stevenson, Jonathan Stewart	
Honorary Secretary	John Macpherson	10 Sandhill Gardens BT5 6FF 028 9028 2076 jdmacpherson@hotmail.com
Honorary Treasurer	Brian Acheson	028 9042 4892
Assistant Honorary Treasurer	Victor Dukelow	028 9029 0625

Gift Aid Secretary	Jack Dunlop	028 9065 4103
Parochial Nominators	Victor Dukelow, Patrick Good, Elizabeth Leonard, Linda Wilson	
Diocesan Synod members	Patrick Good , Dr. Elizabeth Leonard Charles Auchmuty (Under 30)	
Organist and Choral Director	Dr Joe McKee	07976 294574
Assistant Organist	Brian Clements	028 9079 3641
Magazine Editor	Billy McAlpine	028 9042 4390 colmaged@outlook.com
Parish Webmaster	Dr Jonathan Stewart	office.knock@down.anglican.org
C of I Gazette Distributor	Moranne Noad	028 9079 3704
Bible Reading Fellowship notes	Joan Madill	028 9065 6591
Church flowers	Eleanor Launchbury	028 9028 1204
Premise's Convenor	Stewart Beckwith	028 9048 6622
Crucifer	Mark Lavery	028 9573 8743
Parish Office Administrator/ Financial Giving Secretary	Karen Patterson Office hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am-1.00pm	 028 9065 6891 office.knock@down.anglican.org

Safeguarding Panel

**The Rector, Select Vestry and parish leaders are committed to upholding good practice in the parish's ministry with children and young people. Should you have cause for concern or suspicion regarding child welfare in the parish please contact:
The Rector 02890471514 Patrick Good 02890656908 Elizabeth Leonard 02890653162**



ST COLUMBA'S KNOCK

***An open door to friendship,
fellowship and faith***

YOUR attendance can strengthen YOUR parish!



CHURCH CAR PARKING

When parking to go to church services or Parish Organisations please be sensitive to the residents in the local community by taking care not to block entrances or pavements.
Thank you!



Facebook

St Columba's Knock is now on Facebook. **'Like'** our page to see updates on events, services and photos. Search coiknock on Facebook or Messenger to find us easily.

For those who are new to St Columba's and would like more information about the life and membership of the parish, please give your name and phone number to our Churchwardens or contact the Parish Office during office hours Monday-Friday, 9.00am-1.00pm on 028 9065 6891.

