

CONTACT

January - February 2022
groomsportparishchurch.org

*Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the light of the nations
and you bring light to our darkness.
So shine in our hearts that all our
actions, words and attitudes at all
times will reflect lives filled with the
praise of your glory.*



Church Officials



Rev Duncan Pollock

Rector of Groomsport Parish Church
028 9146 4476

Rector's Hour

There is no Rector's hour at present due to social distancing rules. It will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.

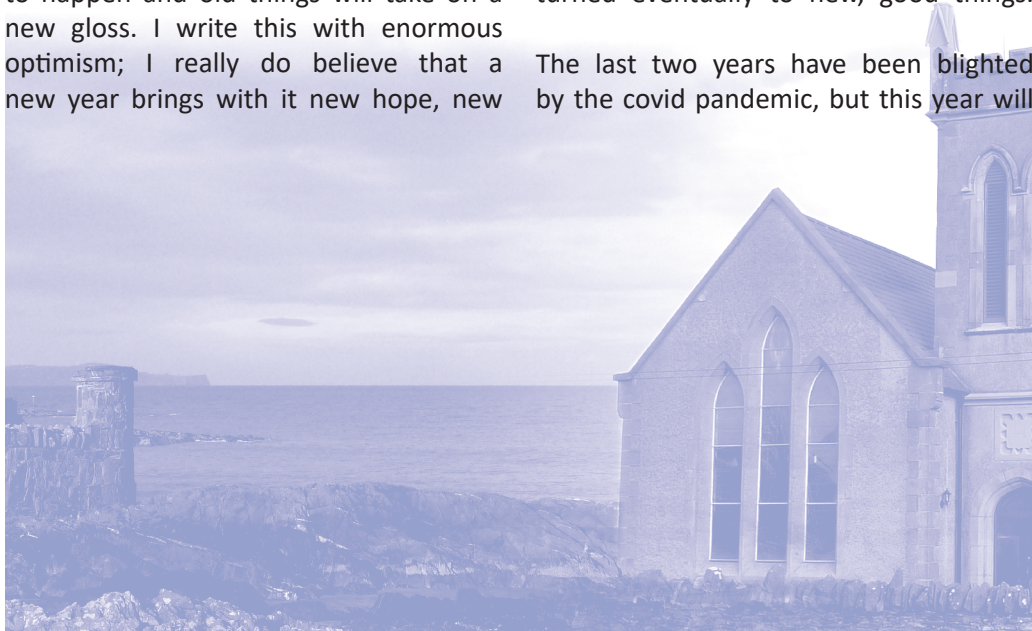
Rector's Recess

Whilst our Rector is always available to his congregation at all hours of every day, it is hoped that, where possible, the period between lunchtime Friday and Sunday Services may be void of contact so as to allow him family time, quiet reflection and preparation for the week ahead; emergency requirements and visits excepted.



From the Rector

2022, a New Year, a momentous year, a year in which new things are going to happen and old things will take on a new gloss. I write this with enormous optimism; I really do believe that a new year brings with it new hope, new opportunities, new joys and, yes, new sadnesses; but even sadness can be turned eventually to new, good things. The last two years have been blighted by the covid pandemic, but this year will



be different. We have been learning to live with the infection; we know when to stay away and, when necessary, to keep our distance; we've learnt to tolerate face masks and hand sanitizing; we've learnt how to continue the ministry of our Church in new ways; and though we might not see it, our ministry has been extended to so many others through our recorded and live streamed services. And now, we will have to start thinking about bringing others with us, especially our youngsters. We'll begin that enterprise on February 6, when we will celebrate "The Presentation of Christ in the Temple" or Candlemas as it has become known. We will begin confirmation classes for our young people and even for those of more mature years who would like to be confirmed. It's just going to be a wonderful, momentous year!

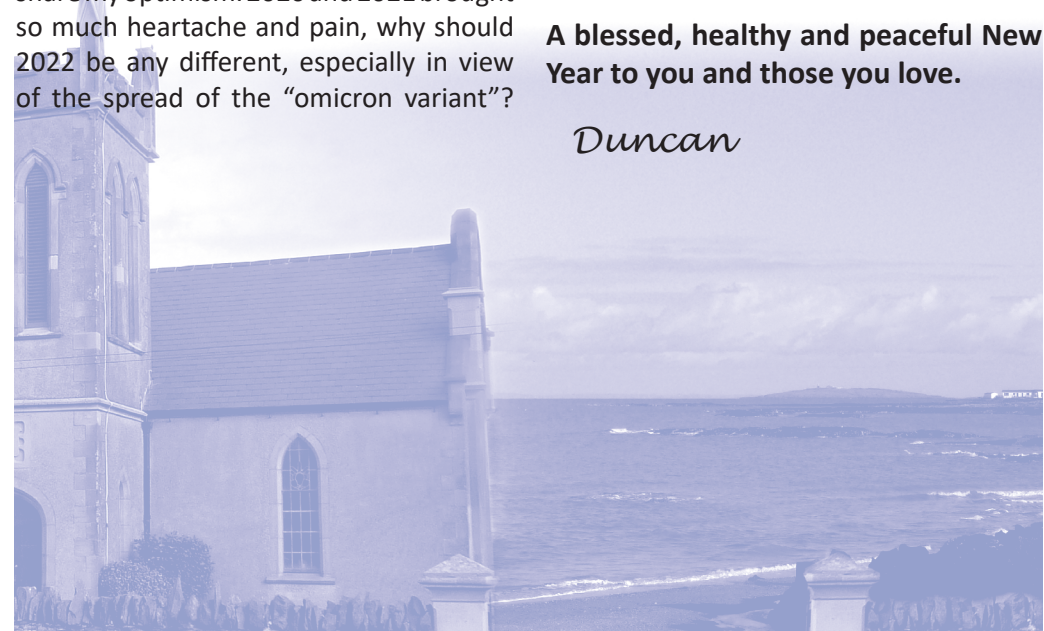
Now I can understand if you don't quite share my optimism. 2020 and 2021 brought so much heartache and pain, why should 2022 be any different, especially in view of the spread of the "omicron variant"?

What proof do I have that 2022 is going to be any different? None. I have no proof, no concrete evidence of anything. I can no more see into the future than Mystic Meg. But I have made a new year's resolution to be more upbeat in my thinking and perhaps more believing in the Gospel.

St Mark's Gospel opens with the words, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." What a statement! What a statement to give us cause to be optimistic. There's a prayer in our prayer book that says, "Your mighty power brings good out of evil, joy out of grief, life out of death". We have just celebrated the Incarnation, "The Word made flesh", Emmanuel, God with us! In the communion service, we talk of the "New Testament" the "New Covenant". A New Year, a new hope and a new resolution to be more trusting in that God who, "Makes all things new!"

A blessed, healthy and peaceful New Year to you and those you love.

Duncan



Vestry Minutes

Live streaming of services has been going well. It has emerged that there is a need for shelving in that corner of the Church along with more power points.

Free standing hand sanitisers have been ordered.

The Maxwell Hall has had two coats of plaster and is to be painted soon.

Lights in the Canon Tyney Hall have been sorted. Barry has been exploring the concept of Alternative Energy and Vestry Members have been asked to consider his report over the Christmas holidays.

Damage was caused to the lead flashing on the Church during the recent "Storm Arwen".

It was agreed that the boiler servicing in the Church and the Halls should be synchronised.

Because of Covid regulations, the Advent Sunday Service of Thanksgiving could not be held in the Church at Saul, so was held at 2.00 pm in our own Church on 28th November. The Bishop was in attendance. Vestry members provided refreshments for the Tea following the Service.

Plans have been made for a full return to Church in the New Year, including the opening of the Church for Private Prayer from 9.00 - 12.00 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. A rota of Church "hosts" will be arranged to ensure Covid mitigations are followed. A letter has been sent to organisations requesting they carry out risk assessments before their return in the New Year.

The current Rectory tenants will be moving out of the Rectory in January. The Rectory sub – committee has been busy researching details concerning ownership of our Rectory and will have a further meeting in January in the Rectory with an architect and legal and financial representatives. They will report back to the full Vestry following that meeting.

There is now a folder in the office listing details of every role in our Church and all Vestry members have been asked to read it.

The Village Tuesday Club will be meeting on the first Tuesday in the month in our Halls from 2022.

A parishioner has been asked to coordinate Safeguarding Trust and will avail of Diocesan Training.

A new DVD Stall is being set up in the Avril Morley room for purchase of DVDs. The stall will operate like the Bookstall, with donations going to a charity to be decided by the Select Vestry in due course.

The Village Christmas Service was held in our Church on Friday 3rd December and was extremely well attended. A retiring collection was taken and a donation of £200 was given to the Children's Hospice.

At the December meeting of the Select Vestry, the Vestry decided on the following donations to charity:

£605 from the "smartie" tube appeal and the bookstall was given to CMSI.

The Harvest Appeal realised £900; this was divided equally between SOS (a Belfast Charity supporting those who have struggled with suicide and the support of their families) and The Alzheimers Society Northern Ireland.

£400 was given to JDRF UK, a juvenile diabetes research organisation;

£400 was given to Air Ambulance NI;

£400 was given to Christian Resources; a Bangor based Christian counselling service.

£400 was given to OMA in Uganda;

£400 was given to ADDNI, a Belfast based charity supporting individuals and families touched by ADHD.

£600 was given to Water Aid.

Salaries and Christmas gifts were discussed and agreed.

Parishioners are to be asked not to park directly outside the Church gate in case of emergency.

Members of the Select Vestry were asked not to give the Parish Administrator extra tasks or work without first clearing that work with the Rector or the Secretary to the Select Vestry.

Contact Us ...

The Rector's Warden

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The People's Warden

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The Rector's Glebe Warden

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The People's Glebe Warden

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Hall Problems

Billy - billy@groomsportparishchurch.org
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Services For January & February

Sunday
09
Jan

Epiphany 1

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Parish Communion
6:00 pm Compline

Sunday
16
Jan

Epiphany 2

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word
6:00 pm Evening Prayer

Sunday
23
Jan

Epiphany 3 - (The Conversion of St Paul)

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Morning Prayer
6:00 pm Holy Communion

Sunday
30
Jan

Epiphany 4

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Morning Prayer
6:00 pm Compline

Sunday
06
Feb

The Fourth Sunday Before Lent

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am A Family Service for Candlemas
6:00 pm Evening Prayer

Sunday
13
Feb

The Third Sunday Before Lent

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Parish Communion
6:00 pm Compline

Sunday
20
Feb

The Second Sunday Before Lent

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word
6:00 pm Holy Communion

Sunday
27
Feb

The Sunday Before Lent

8:30 am Holy Communion
11:30 pm Morning Prayer
6:00 pm Holy Communion

Wed
02
Mar

Ash Wednesday

7:30 pm A Service of Communion to mark the beginning of Lent

Sunday
06
Mar

Lent 1

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am A Family Service to mark the beginning of Lent
6:00 pm Evening Prayer

Returning to Church

The Church will reopen for private prayer from Monday 10 January, from 9 am until 12 noon in the morning. The Church will be open every weekday morning, but please be aware that there will be a 'host' sitting in Church to ensure people's safety. Before Covid-19 struck, the Church was open every day from 8 am until 6 pm. It is a joy that we can reopen the building if only with strict limitations.

Mid-Week Services

Tuesday 7.30 – Compline
Thursday 11.00 – Holy Communion
The first Wednesday of the month, Holy Communion is celebrated in the Chapel at Mount Stewart

Sunday School

The Sunday School hasn't met since the pandemic struck. But Maggie Townsley, our Sunday School Leader has kept in touch faithfully with our loyal band of young people. The Sunday School will meet for the first time on 6th February; we will celebrate Jesus being taken to the Temple by his parents. It seems an appropriate time for us to bring our youngsters back into Church.

Confirmation

We have drawn together some of our young people to consider Confirmation. Our Bishop will be with us in May to lead us in a Service of Confirmation. Confirmation 'Classes' for young people will begin on Sunday 23rd January in the Avril Morely Room at 7.30 pm. For those of a mature disposition, the Rector would love to help you consider confirmation in a way that suits you best.

Anyone not already contacted by the Rector, who would like to think about this momentous step, are encouraged to speak with the Rector.

From The Registers

Holy Matrimony

Leon Smith and Jayne Taggart
11th November

It was a joy to welcome the closest friends and family of Leon and Jayne into Church on Armistice Day, to witness their marriage. It was a quiet affair, with little music, which rather added to the sense of solemnity of the occasion. We pray God's blessing on this lovely couple.

Holy Rest

William 'Jimmy' Palmer - 14th November

Jimmy in his time had been a tremendous sportsman, business man and Church man. He had rubbed shoulders with the great and the good, made and lost fortunes. His life had been full and he had known terrific success, as well as terrible sadness. Underneath all this, however, was a man of deep humility and faith. As a larger than life character, he will be sorely missed.

Carole Barbosa - 19th November

Carole was an unassuming character. For the last ten years she slipped into Church, almost unnoticed, to take up her seat at the back of the Church next to the organ. And yet Carole was something of a polymath: an accomplished draughtswoman and artist; wonderfully widely read; a member of U3A; a much respected philatelist, both here and further afield. For the last six months she had been struggling with limited mobility, but just as she was about to be discharged from hospital and

looking forward to returning home, she picked up an infection. She died peacefully on 29th October in the Ulster Hospital.

Patricia 'Paddy' Maddern -
23rd November

Paddy's family had lived on The Hill in Groomsport for many, many years. She was an adventurer in an age when single woman rarely went abroad unaccompanied. She was a dancer, an actor, secretary, a mother and wife. She was beautiful and, on occasion, feisty! The last years of her life were played out with her son, Paul, in Carrowdore, her body crippled by arthritis and, towards the end, her mind fogged by dementia. She died peacefully in hospital with her beloved son holding her hand.

Cecil Crawley - 27th November

It is difficult to sum Cecil up in a few lines, but the words that come to mind are hard-working, loyal, loving. His working life was as a quantity surveyor and he was well known throughout the Belfast building trade. But he was also a member of the RUC reserve, having previously served as a member of the "B Specials". Cecil always held to his belief that the specials were unfairly maligned. He had been a Church Warden, the Leader of his Parish Youth Group, an adventurer, a loving husband and father. The last five years of his life was blighted by visual impairment and deafness, but that never stopped him from dipping into his huge reservoir of anecdotes and jokes!

Robert Magill - 22nd December

Robert's funeral took place in Clarke's Funeral Home. It was a measure of Robert's popularity that the Funeral Home, even with social distancing measures in place, was filled. Robert had served in the Royal Navy for 25 years, retiring as a Chief Petty Officer. He then moved to HM Coastguard, where he had a successful second career. For the last years of his life, he was a devoted carer for his wife Margaret. He suffered a fatal heart attack. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Margaret and his children.

*"May the souls of the departed,
through the mercy of Christ, rest
in peace and rise in glory"*



This edition of "Contact" is published a little later than usual. Amongst other things, Covid and Christmas rather stood in the way of getting the magazine assembled, edited, proof-read and printed. I hope that the next edition will be published on time at the beginning of March.

The Revision of the Register of General Vestry Members

At the start of each new year, we are obliged under the Constitution of the Church of Ireland to go through our record of members (the Register of General Vestry Members) amend it and bring it up to date. We do this by checking on those who have moved away, those who have died or those who no longer attend Groomsport Parish Church. It is a difficult task and one that has to be handled sensitively.

During the pandemic, we have striven to keep in touch with all those on our Parish lists, by post, by 'phone and by email. It may well be that some will no longer want to remain on those lists. Postage, in particular, is expensive, around £150 per mail shot.

I don't want to offend anyone, nor do I want to lose long standing members of the Parish, but if you feel that the time is right for you to stand back from Parish membership, do please let us know. Our contact details are below. Remember, you can always find details of our Parish life on our website.

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Tales From The Archives

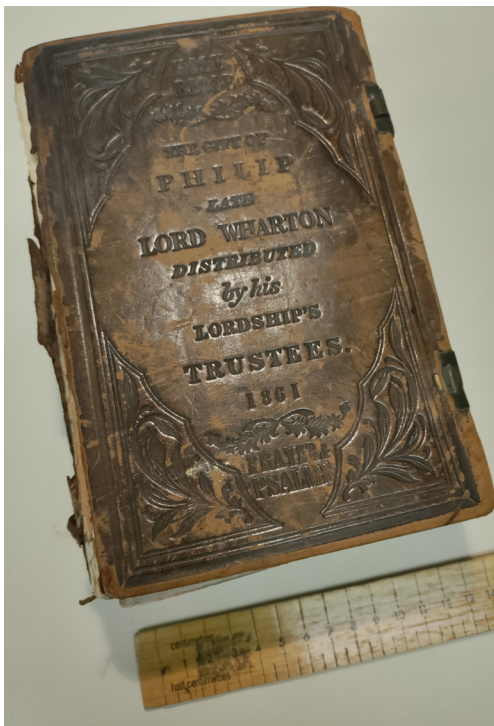
January 2022

I am grateful to Ian Sloan for his detailed research and for writing the story of the little Bible, which is one of our particularly special archival possessions. We hope you enjoy reading about it and perhaps find cause to make a response.

Barry

The Wharton Bible

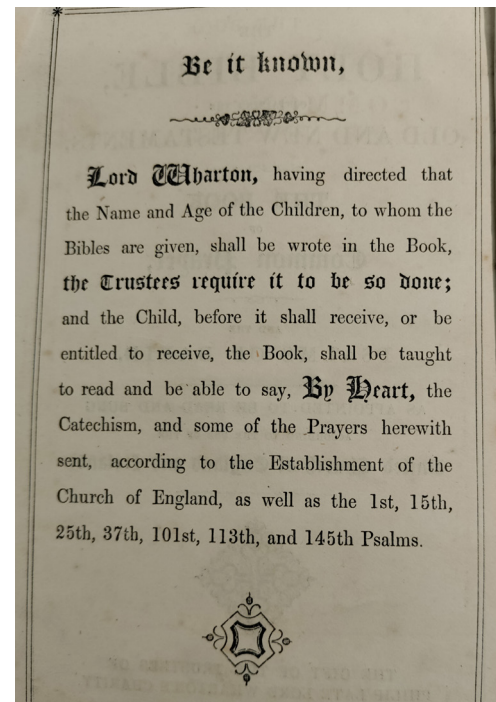
This elderly Bible has lain undisturbed and seemingly forgotten in our Archives. We don't know exactly for how long it has been in our possession, or indeed who



it was that donated it. It lay for years in our Vestry/Vestry Lobby, perhaps through the time of several Rectors, before it was removed safely to our Archive. Perhaps it was for these reasons that we decided to remove the Bible from its anonymous cardboard storage box, gently dust it off and explore what stories it might have to tell.

Its spine is torn; this suggests a Bible which has been used and read and loved by its owner(s). Measuring just 13 wide x 19 long x 7 centimetres thick, it comprises more than one thousand yellowing pages of tightly packed small black print, which couldn't have made it an easy or practical book to use. It was printed in 1861 by the Oxford University Press, less than twenty years after our own Church in Groomsport was built.

So, where does the Wharton name come from? That's simple enough. It comes from the Bible Charity founded by Philip, 4th. Lord Wharton in 1696. His Lordship was an interesting character. Born in 1613 into a staunch Christian family in Northern England, Philip was both well-educated and well-travelled. During the English Civil War, he supported Cromwell and Parliament but opposed the execution of King Charles. He later welcomed the Restoration of his son Charles The Second and became a Privy Councillor to William The Third.



Six years before his death in 1696, Wharton began distributing Bibles to children, and in his Will, he left 463 acres of land near York to help fund the continuation of this work. The Trustees of Lord Wharton's Charity continue his work to this day www.lordwhartonbibles.org.uk.

Our Bible consists of the Old and New Testaments; The Book of Common Prayer, and the Psalms of David. On an inside page, it stipulates Lord Wharton's wish that the Bible "be read and sung according to the use of the United Church of England and Ireland". Despite its modest dimensions, the Bible's list of contents itemises twenty-four items. Most of these will be familiar to modern eyes, but some less so. For example, it includes forms of Service for the "Baptism for those of Riper

Years", and "A Commination or denouncing of God's anger and judgement against sinners". The Oxford English Dictionary defines "commination" as the recital of divine threats against sinners in the Anglican Liturgy for Ash Wednesday. Did you know that? More intriguingly perhaps, our Bible provides "A Form of Prayer for the Twentieth Day of June".

On a more personal note, there is a name inscribed inside the Bible's front cover. It reads "John Mealing, aged 14 years, December 1861". John would have been the Bible's original owner, and there is a fascinating history behind his name appearing there. In his Will, Lord Wharton stipulated that the name and age of every child to whom a Bible was given, must be written inside the book. Not only that, but his Bibles were only to be given after the child had been taught to read and learn the Catechism, some specified Prayers, as well as seventeen selected Psalms. Phew! Fortunately, this requirement seems to have eased somewhat over the ensuing years.

The Mealing name is not indigenous to Ireland. So do we know anything of how the Bible got here? In 1861, the Charity was almost an exclusively Anglican one. Its main recipients were in England, probably in those counties linked directly with the late Lord Wharton namely, Westmorland, Cumberland, Yorkshire and Buckinghamshire. Bibles were issued at the request of local Vicars who did not name the recipients. Unfortunately no records of these remain, although it is known the Bibles were often given at Confirmation

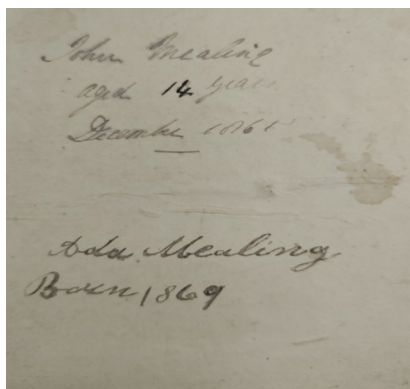
and to poorer families. So, while we will never know for sure, it is reasonable to surmise that John Mealing received his Bible in Lancashire and that it was later given by him or a subsequent member of his family at someone's death. His signature should have been accompanied by the name of his Parish and the signature of his Vicar, but we know that this didn't always happen.

So there it is. A brief look at a small, seemingly insignificant, rather tattered and tired elderly Bible which has seen better days. Yet there is an historic link here with Parliament, Cromwell and the Civil War, by way of a seventeenth century English Peer of deep Christian faith, who passionately wanted to make the Holy Bible available to poor children, to read and learn scripture as a basis for developing their own personal faith and commitment to a loving God.

We are grateful to Rev Peter Sheasby, Clerk to the Trustees of the Wharton Bible Charity, for his help in researching our Bible's history. He would be happy to hear from anyone who might wish to know more about the on-going work of his Charity.

As always, if you are interested in delving into our Parish Archives for yourself, our Archivist Barry will be delighted to help you on what should be a journey of discovery and wonder.

Ian Sloan



God in the Arts



Rembrandt - Presentation of Christ

Simeon in the painting of the 'Presentation of Christ' had been waiting. Rembrandt has captured 'Simeon with the Christ Child in the Temple': the faith and patience, the hope and humility of an old man, a priest, who takes the babe into his arms and blesses God. It was the artist's last painting and left unfinished at his death in 1669.

Picture used by kind permission of the National Museum, Stockholm.'

The Lounge of Departure

Sent in By Freda Conway - author unknown

I wait in the Lounge of Departure,
I know not the time of my flight.
I hope it's some way in the future
But it could be I'm flying tonight.

The flight I await goes to Heaven
I know that it's lovely up there,
For I've read their fine brochure - the Bible
And I speak to them oft in my Prayer.

It costs very little to go there,
You take nothing with you at all,
And you pay by the way you behave every day
As you wait for St Peter to call.

As I wait for the start of my journey
There are so many things I can see,
Like someone in need of a word or a deed,
So I do what's expected of me.

And I wait in the Lounge of Departure,
Never too sure when I fly,
But I hope when I do,
There's a chance I'll meet you,
We can all pay the fare if we try.

OMA - Opportunities Made Available

The total recovery and restoration of the people of Northern Uganda, from a war that lasted over two decades right from 1986, is a story that will not be concluded soon.

Northern Uganda is a region that comprises over 16 Districts. For over two decades, it has faced a long period of insecurity filled with total oppression, displacement, abduction of both children and adults; women and men who were brainwashed into becoming soldiers and slaves and mutilating victims, in a campaign of intimidation that displaced over 2 million people. By 1996 the government began setting up secure camps. Children living in villages in Northern Uganda became known as “night commuters,” walking miles every evening to the relative safety of the camps or towns in the hope of avoiding abduction.

These camps and the secure town locations became safe havens for people. Being alive the next day became uncertain. Children grew up in the deplorable conditions of these camps. There was a high dependency on government support and foreign aid to survive. The uncertainty of tomorrow became more evident. Hopelessness was the drive for the day.

Both local and international efforts were made to fight the oppression, and in 2006, they indicated the need for peace talk negotiations. Northern Uganda began to feel safe again. A few developments began to take place. People started the journey

of trying to rebuild their lost years.

Despite the current peaceful condition in Northern Uganda, the people are facing the after-effects of the war; hopelessness, unemployment, fear, uncertainty, depression, to mention but a few, which have led to the slow progress of individuals.

Our beneficiaries are the young vulnerable women and men who have experienced some part of the war, while others were born after the war but are experiencing the after-effects of it. This category of beneficiaries has also either dropped out of school or did not go to school at all, and they are between the ages of 18 and 30. The question for us as an organization is, can we help to rebuild their lives, change their mindset and bring back this lost hope that was both inbuilt and felt? Can we create a positive generational impact? We believe “YES”, we can. As an organization, we focus on rebuilding their mindset, growing them spiritually, and supporting them to rewrite their future and become the pillar for healing in their families present and future.

OMA Foundation is a Christian-centred Community-based organization located in Gulu District, and we provide avenues of learning and skill enhancement. We create opportunities for self-growth among this specific group of youth in Gulu District.

We not only equip them with knowledge in different vocational skills like tailoring,

weaving, crocheting, soap making, candle making, carpentry, metal fabrications, and baking/cookery; we also disciple, mentor, provide counselling, promote good agricultural practices, train them on financial literacy, numeracy/literacy, entrepreneurship training, and follow-up supervision. The humbling thing is that this support and training is given to them free of charge.

At OMA Foundation, we envision a dependable youth-filled community where the youth are equipped, not only to change their own lives but also to change the lives of people in the households and communities to which they belong.

We know we cannot achieve all this without your generous financial support. We thank Groomsport Parish Church for always praying for us, and also setting up a website for us, which has helped us a lot in reaching out to many, to show them what we do at OMA Foundation. We do appreciate all the team members and family of Groomsport Parish Church for your generous support towards us.

We invite you to visit our website: omafoundationug.org.

Chris and Gloria Dima



A Long Expected Journey

My holiday in the Outer Hebrides
Andrew Nicholson

For the last eight years, my No. 1 holiday destination has been the Isle of Harris (Na Hearadh) in the Outer Hebrides and in October, I returned to the little township of Seilebost on the west coast of the island it was my fifth visit.

I'd planned to go in the autumn of 2020 but this was scuppered by COVID-19 and the same thing happen when I rebooked for the spring of 2021. Eventually, thanks to the vaccination roll-out and Cal-Mac Ferries, my holiday was able to go ahead this autumn.

I arrived at the small port of Tarbert at 4 o'clock on Friday 22nd October and after a quick pit-stop to stock up on supplies, I headed for my 'holiday home' by the sea.



Not surprisingly, the weather was mixed for the time of year, but both ferry crossings were very calm, and the sun did come out to play on three of my seven days on the island. The sunniest day



was Wednesday and the pictures below show why this remote corner of the UK is becoming very popular as a beach holiday destination.



Before leaving Harris and Lewis (which is actually one island), I visited the standing stones at Calanais – a cruciform shaped stone circle erected about 5,000 years ago.



It's pretty much anyone's guess as to why the stones were erected, but it keeps the archaeologists busy.



My departure from Harris was marked by one of HM Coastguard's helicopters flying very close to the ferry as it left Tarbert. It seemed a bit excessive to me, as I'd only taken a very small quantity of alcohol from the Harris Gin Distillery!

To make sure I didn't feel too sad about leaving Harris, I made a booking to return in October 2022

Just For Fun

This riddle is a nice easy one for the family—maybe after watching the movie Die Hard with a Vengeance

NYPD officer John McClane and shop owner Zeus Carver are in quite the predicament. A psychopath who calls himself Simon is detonating bombs all over New York City. McClane and Zeus find another bomb in Central Park, and to disarm it they need to solve Simon's riddle.

The bomb is in a briefcase with a precise electronic scale. McClane and Zeus have a 5-gallon jug and a 3-gallon jug. They are standing next to a fountain where they can take as much water as they want. They have 5 minutes to put one of the jugs on the scale with exactly 4 gallons of water in it, or the bomb will detonate.

How do you measure exactly 4 gallons using the two jugs?



Groomsport's Railway Station

Or more accurately, Groomsport Road, Ballygrainey.

This little known station on the Belfast and County Down Railway has been known by three names over the years. First of all it was known as Groomsport and Bangor, then Groomsport Road and finally Ballygrainey.

The station was situated by Six Road Ends, two arms of which extended to Bangor town and the fishing village of Groomsport, each approximately four miles distant. It was built by the Belfast and County Down Railway Company. In 1861 the station consisted of one passenger platform 539 feet long and one goods siding. The passenger platform had a signal installation, not as you would expect to find - in a signal cabin - but in a shed at the road overbridge situated at the Donaghadee end of the platform. It was seldom used and was usually 'switched out' (railway parlance for not needed). The shed had advertisements for Camp Coffee (pretty awful stuff in long neck square bottles). The death knell of the branch was the decision by the government of the day to switch the mail steamers from Port Patrick to Stranraer in 1862 thus sending the mail traffic to Larne instead of Donaghadee.

In 1921 due to severe financial pressure which set in shortly after the end of World War One, and also by the numerous private bus owners operating in the district, the directors of the B. & C.D.R., in



order to improve efficiency, considered an extension of the Bangor Branch to Donaghadee via Groomsport. This was a more direct route and consideration was given to Electrification, which would have reduced running costs over time. The cost of this development was estimated at £383,000, which was a lot of money in those days, so no further action was taken. While most people know that the B & C.D.R. also operated the railway from Comber, Newtownards, Conlig, Ballygrainey and on to Donaghadee, readers may not be aware that a branch was at one time planned to Bangor from Conlig. Conlig, which opened in 1861, closed in 1865. It only existed for four years. It had been an important station for the Dowager Lady Helen and her staff as it was situated near the Dowager House. Lady Helen fell ill and died in 1867. Meanwhile, the Marquis of Dufferin & Ava had already taken an interest in the construction of Helen's Bay Station which was established in 1865. The buildings at Helen's Bay were in simulation of a fortified castle linked to a courtyard

and thence to a wooded roadway that ran from Clandeboye House outside Bangor to the Beach bathing place at Helen's Bay. So whilst Helen's Bay station continues as an active station on the Bangor Line, Groomsport Road can still be seen, although closed to rail traffic by the Ulster Transport Authority in 1950. The Station House is still in existence, and privately owned. The platform can just be seen and the road bridge is still used to this day.

Walter Burke



The no 219 passes from Donaghadee. The signal cabin is seen at the far end of the platform.

Candlemas - 2nd February

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, 2nd February. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself.

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child - to 'present Him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new mother, was 'purified'. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year's supply of candles for the church on this day - hence the name, Candlemas.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in Luke 2:22-40. Simeon's great declaration of faith and recognition of who Jesus was is of course found in the Nunc Dimittis, which is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer in the West. But in medieval times, the Nunc Dimittis was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Only gradually did it win a place in the daily prayer life of the Church.

Walking For Softies

It was on a blustery, but bright and invigorating Saturday morning in late October that our strolling group assembled in Donaghadee, in the car park next to the Sir Samuel Kelly Lifeboat. There was a good crowd of us as we set off towards the Commons sporting a kaleidoscope of coloured anoraks, raincoats, waterproofs, rucksacks and one small dog.

We wisely side-stepped the various exercise machines dotted along the way, stopping only briefly beside the Commons toilets to get our "photees took", before turning back towards the car park and the promise of hot coffee and warm scones awaiting us in the Pier 36 Restaurant! The refreshments were delicious and beautifully served, as we sat together around our large table in the Copelands Suite and enjoyed the craic and company of good friends. Everyone agreed it had been a great morning.



Our November walk had to be cancelled because of Storm Arwen. So it was on a Saturday morning in early December, that we gathered in Bangor Railway Station to catch the train to the Titanic Quarter. It was stormy and overcast with the threat of driving rain. Consequently, our stroll around the Quarter was foreshortened due to the deteriorating weather conditions. We regrouped in the nearby and excellent Dock Cafe, which is a Christian charity run by volunteers. We sat around the mix of tables and chairs and enjoyed the refreshments while the windy rain pattered against the windows. Fortunately, the weather had improved sufficiently to allow us a dry walk back to the Titanic Halt and return train to Bangor.

We will soon be choosing our walks for this year, with some favourite locations likely and maybe some new ones too. As always, if you would be interested in joining us, whether for the walk or just the coffee, scones and craic afterwards, you will be most welcome. We meet on the 4th Saturday of the month at 10 am.

For more information, please contact Zandra 0796 8401386 or Ian 0796 8401387 and get the lowdown. You really won't be disappointed.

Zandra & Ian

The Alternative Christmas Fair & 12 Days of Christmas Luxury Ballot

We were so disappointed again this year not to be able to run our normal Christmas Fair. It is always such a great event when we can all get together to enjoy each others company over a festive cuppa and browse all the lovely items for sale. However, it was not to be, given the covid restrictions, so once again, we decided to run our alternative fair and luxury ballots, which had been so successful last year.

As is the norm in Groomspoint Parish Church, we had great support for the event from the outset with offers of new products or changes to last years menu to give a bit of variety. Our bakers, jam, marmalade and chutney makers willingly signed up despite the fact that at that early stage, before the orders are in, they have no idea of the quantities required. We are always amazed and so grateful for their support and hard work in the midst of their own Christmas preparations. While there are so many, who contributed we want to particularly thank Pauline, who made 570 mince pies and baked 76 cakes, Hester, who made 290 truffles and Betty Martin, who made 48 puddings and presented them so beautifully wrapped.



As the food arrived in the halls our band of volunteers set about making up the orders and presenting them as festively as possible. As well as the items above we packed 416 traybakes, 360 shortbread and 50 assorted jams, marmalades and chutney. Our volunteer drivers then did a sterling job getting the orders out on time. We hope that you enjoyed the food and that it added a little extra cheer to Christmas.



We know many of you look forward each year to our luxury ballot organised so ably by Heather. She is on the lookout all year for items to go into the ballot to make it such a successful part of our Christmas event. This years ballot was no exception with some fantastic prizes, including jewellery, beauty products and a lovely pot of flowers.



We were fortunate to have Carol offer to bake a beautiful Christmas cake for a second ballot this year. It really was stunning and we all agreed it would be a shame to cut it! Thanks to Carol for her continued support at these events.

The ballots were drawn by the Rector and filmed by Amanda. Thanks to them for their help. You can see the draw on YouTube. The full list of winners is also shown below.

We hope you have enjoyed your festive food and ballot prizes. As a result of your

support, we raised £2180 for church funds. A tremendous and very worthwhile result. A big thanks to anyone who helped in any way. We are looking for to our normal Christmas Fair this year!



Prize winners 2021 - 12 Days of Christmas Luxury Draw

1. Sterling Silver Bracelet - Gary Keenan
2. Planter donated by Kylestone Nurseries - Kielan McRobert
3. Tweedmill luxury Throw - Ken Boyd
4. Estee Lauder perfume and body lotion - Andrea Adams
5. Galway Crystal Glasses – David McKnight
6. His 'n Hers leather wallets – Margaret Horner
7. Two luxury pillows – Andrea Adams
8. Man's Regatta fleece sweater – Andrea Johnston
9. Lady's long sleeve Regatta T shirt – Ken Boyd
10. Molton Brown fragrance and shower gel – Pauline Harrison
11. Wall clock – Helen Craythorne
12. Wicker Tote Bag – Pauline Harrison

Christmas Cake Raffle

Elizabeth Stuart



Thoughts of a Blow In...

After such a long and mild autumn lulled us into a false sense of security, Storm Arwen, closely followed by Storm Bara, announced that winter is well and truly here! I hope that everyone was safe from any storm damage and that no one had to lack power or amenities for too long. Sitting safely indoors, listening to the wind roaring around the house certainly reinforced the awesome power of nature that we are keenly aware of living so close to the sea.

The reminder of the passing of the seasons certainly brings us closer to Christmas and the meaning of this special time of year, both in church and in our daily lives. Although it might be looking like another less than 'normal' Christmas in outward terms, the sense of hope and renewal is more valuable than ever in these challenging times.

As the afternoons grow ever shorter, it's lovely to see the neighbours up and down the road putting up their Christmas trees and decorations so that the coloured lights are cheerfully displayed in their windows. The wee ones next door were playing football in the front garden the other day with a friend, all fitted with natty headlights so they could still score goals in the dark! They didn't mind me calling them over and disturbing their game, especially as it was to hand over a beaded penguin Christmas decoration I had made for them. They dashed indoors to arrange it on the tree at once!

Like everyone else, I'm slowly ticking off my Christmas to-do list and thinking that I must get around to some serious present wrapping at some stage, at least before its panic stations! I have emailed my godson in England to ask what he and his brother might like as a Christmas gift. But given he's a teenager, he might need another nudge in a few days so that they can receive something within the limits of Christmas delivery schedules!

I came across these traditional words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that I felt were a lovely seasonal reminder of the message of Christmas. Wishing you all a safe and happy time, whatever your plans may be.

***"I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"***

Prayer Room

God whose love reaches to the highest heavens
how can we keep silent?

God whose righteousness stands like the tallest mountain
how can we keep silent?

God whose justice is deeper than any ocean
how can we keep silent?

God whose grace flows like a never-ending river
how can we keep silent?

How can we not proclaim your majesty
from generation to generation?

How can we not raise the lamp of your Salvation
for all the world to see?

God whose love reaches to the highest heavens
we praise your mighty name!



Almighty God,
who caused the light of the gospel
to shine throughout the world
through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul:
Grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion
may follow him in bearing witness to your truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

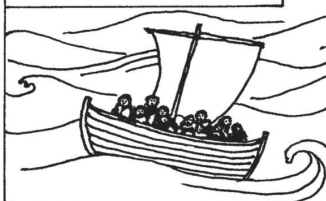
It can be read in the Bible in
Mt 14:13-22, Mk 6:45-52, Jn 5:16-21

After Jesus had fed the crowd, he sent his disciples off in their boat and the crowd away. He went up the mountain to pray.

Jesus spent the evening with his father God.



A strong wind started to toss the boat around.



They tried rowing but could make no headway.



Not long before morning they saw someone walking past them on the water.



They thought it was a ghost and screamed!



Don't be afraid! It's me, Jesus.



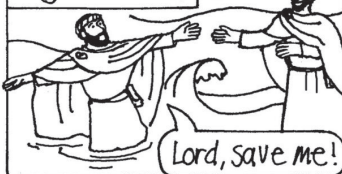
Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you!



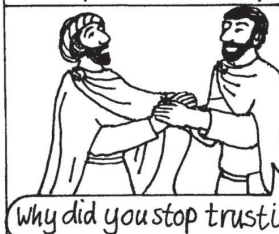
Peter started walking towards Jesus...



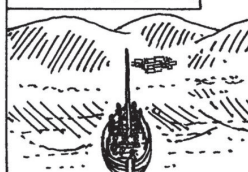
he saw how strong the wind was and took fright. He began to sink!



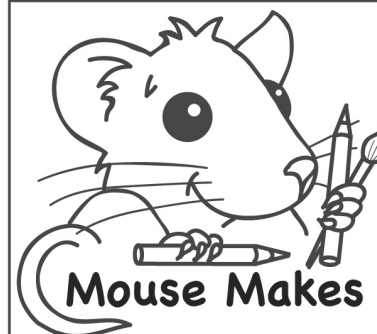
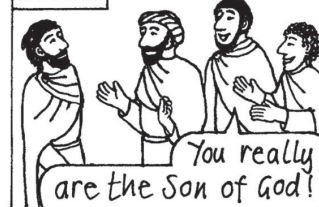
Jesus pulled Peter up.



As Jesus and Peter got into the boat the wind died down.



The disciples worshipped Jesus.



Mouse Makes

But I **trust**
in you,
O Lord;
I say,
"You are
my God."

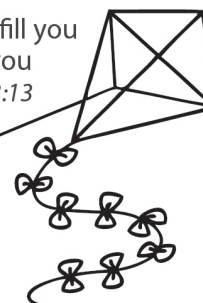
Psalms 31:14

When I am afraid
I will **trust** you,
I praise God for
His word,
I **trust** God, so
I am not afraid.
Psalms 56:3-4



The Lord is good,
a refuge in times
of trouble.
He cares for those
who **trust** in Him.
Nahum 1:7

"May the God of hope fill you
with joy and peace as you
trust in Him." Romans 3:13

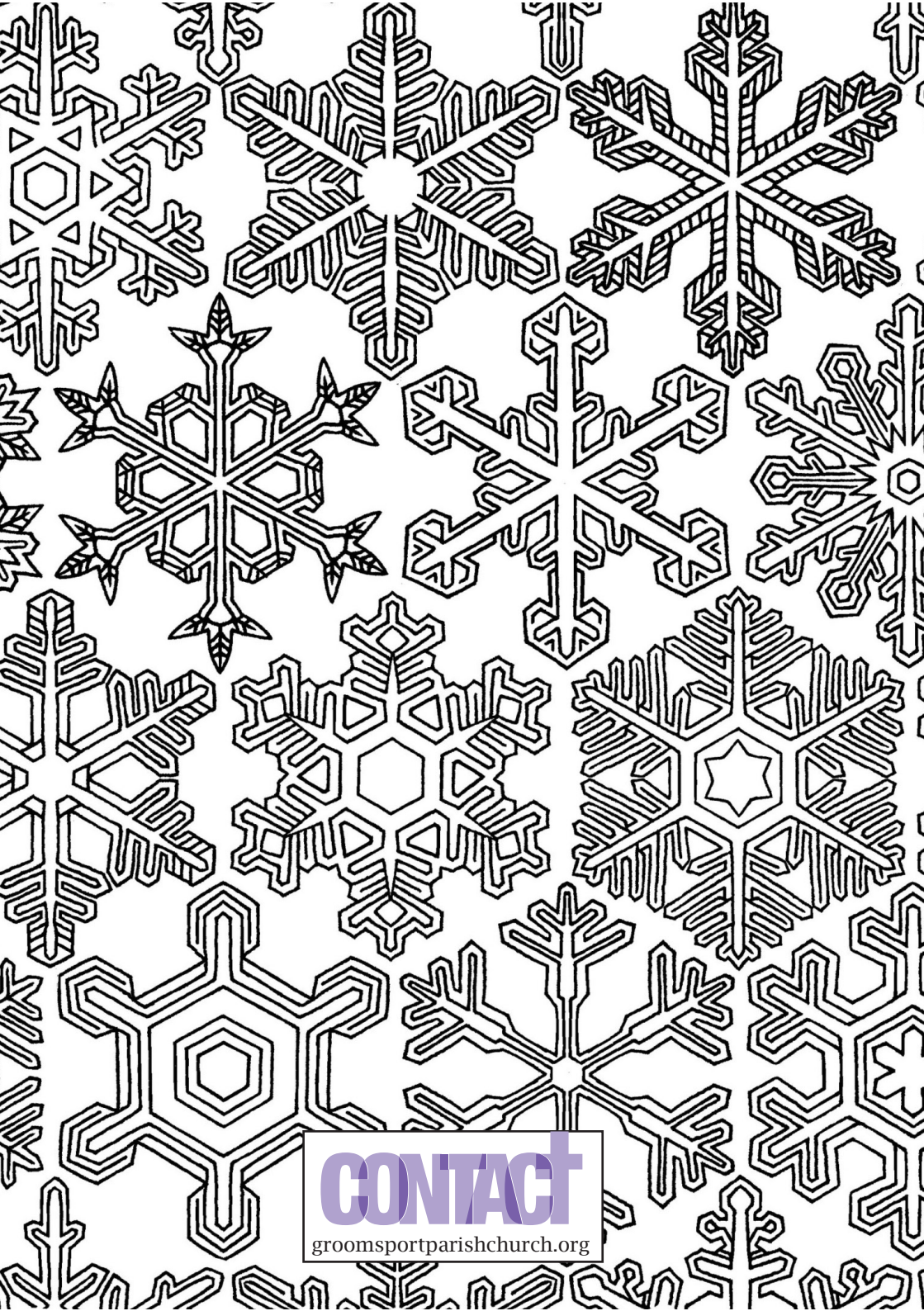


Jesus said:
"Do not be troubled.
Trust in God and
trust in me."
John 14:1

Cut out and colour these cards to
help you to remember to trust in God.

Trust in the Lord with
all your heart and
lean not on your own
understanding.
In all your ways **submit**
to Him and He will make
your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6





CONTACT
groomsportparishchurch.org