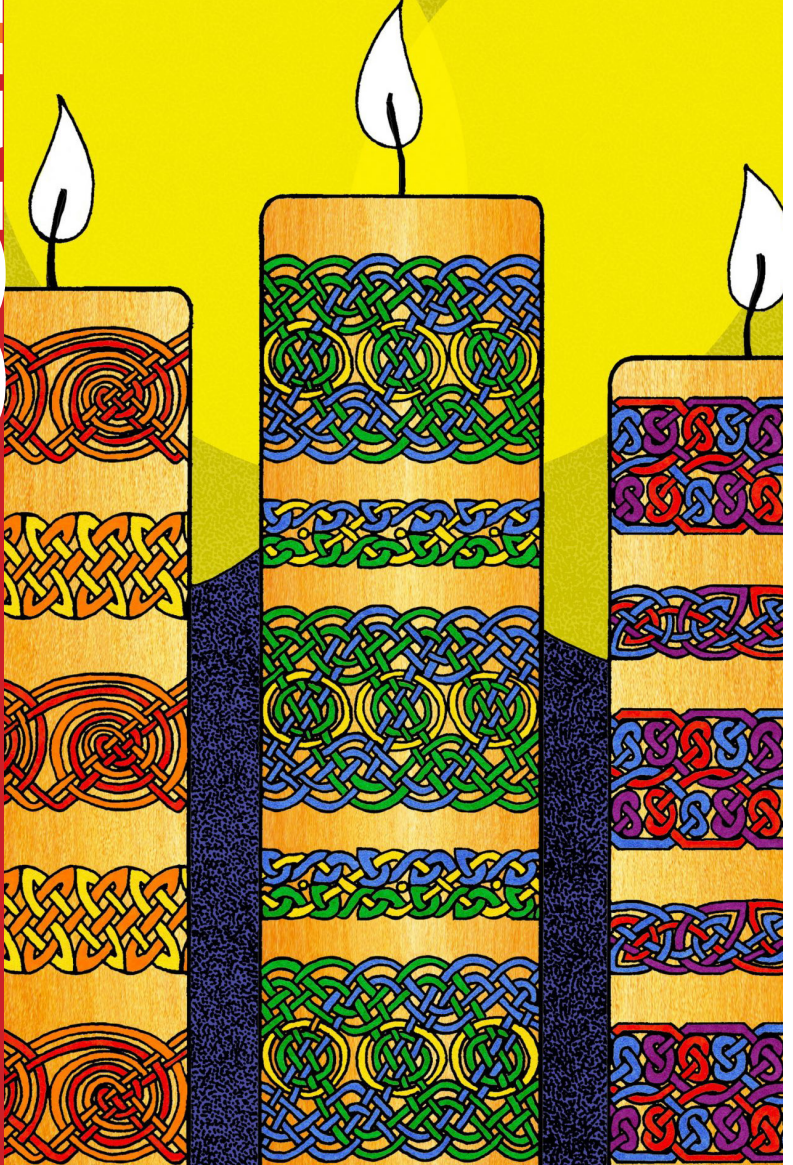


CONTACT

In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.



From the Pulpit



It has been a real privilege over recent months to assist with services in your lovely church at Groomspoint. I am grateful to the Church Wardens, organists, Amanda and Rev Faith Cully for all their help and encouragement to me.

I am now 87 years of age and recently collapsed whilst celebrating Holy Communion in Hollywood Parish Church. The medical folk and others feel that I should now step back from active ministry and reluctantly I have decided to comply with their advice.

Following my career in school administration at Campbell College (1970 - 84) and as the Registrar at Upper Sullivan for three years I served as Northern Secretary of CMS Ireland, travelling to Pakistan, Egypt, Kenya and Uganda and visited The Holy Land on three occasions.

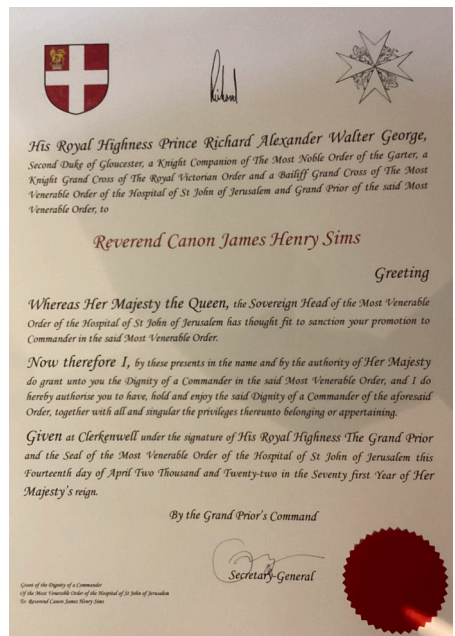
I was Ordained into the Sacred Ministry in 1989, serving as Vicar of Kilbroney Parish, Rostrevor for eight years and a further eight years as Rector of Clonallon and Warrenpoint.

On “retiring” back to Hollywood in 2009 I became a Chaplain to The St. John’s Ambulance Service in Northern Ireland. On the 14th of April of this year, Her Majesty the Queen sanctioned my admission as a Commander of The Order of St. John of Jerusalem. The Investiture was conducted by our Knight Commander, David McCorkill, in Hillsborough Castle on 4th October, which by coincidence was my 87th birthday.

On taking my leave from Groomspoint I wish to express my gratitude to the parishioners for their kindness and friendship and pray God’s Blessing as you await the appointment of a new Rector.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Rev Canon Jim Sims



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

1926 – 2022

As the daughter of Prince Albert, Duke of York, Elizabeth was not born to be Queen any more than her father was born to be King. In December 1936 her uncle Edward VIII gave up his throne and her father became King George VI. Elizabeth was 10 years old. From that moment she became her father's heir and our future Queen. Just over 10 years later in a broadcast to the Nation and the Empire, she pledged herself to the service of "our great imperial family to which we all belong." Five years later she became Queen Elizabeth II and for more than seventy years she kept true to that pledge through good times and bad – some very difficult indeed. Throughout her extraordinary and incomparable reign, through wars, political turmoil and family conflict, she never lost sight of that promise she made so long ago. In keeping it so faithfully Elizabeth became not just

Queen of a nation but for the rest of the world, she became simply The Queen.

The Empire became The Commonwealth, comprising of 54 sovereign and free nations which nevertheless freely acknowledged Her Majesty as their Head. Such a potent and personal relationship between Her Majesty and her peoples is unique in the history of this planet. God grant it may continue and thrive under her son, King Charles III, whom those same free nations have acknowledged as her successor, Head of the Commonwealth.

Queen Elizabeth II will ring through history as the greatest monarch by whom this world has been blessed. Elizabeth II is truly Elizabeth The Great.

Barry



God Save The King!

Contact Us

The Rector's Warden

Mae Burke
mae@groomsportparishchurch.org

The People's Warden

Bert Smith
bert@groomsportparishchurch.org

The Rector's Glebe Warden

Billy McAneney
billy@groomsportparishchurch.org

The People's Glebe Warden

Tony Anderson
tony@groomsportparishchurch.org

Treasurer

Florence McAneney
florence@groomsportparishchurch.org

Secretary to Select Vestry

Heather Pentland
heather@groomsportparishchurch.org

Parish Office

Amanda McWhinney
028 9127 1311
office@groomsportparishchurch.org



Sunday School

Maggie Townsley
maggie@groomsportparishchurch.org

Verger / Caretaker

Susan Moore
028 9127 1311

Gift Aid Secretary

Amanda McWhinney
028 9127 1311

Church Hall Bookings

David McKnight
David@groomsportparishchurch.org

Parish Archivist

Barry Greenaway
barry@groomsportparishchurch.org

Hall Problems

Billy - billy@groomsportparishchurch.org
Tony - tony@groomsportparishchurch.org



NIC103258



The Parish Halls
Main Street
Groomsport
Co Down
BT19 6JR

office@groomsportparishchurch.org

028 91271311

November & December

Third Sunday Before Advent

6th November

8:30 am	Holy Communion
10:30 am	Family Service
2:30 pm	Village Act of Remembrance
6:00 pm	Evening Prayer

Sunday Before Advent

20th November

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

The Second Sunday of Advent

4th December

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

The Fourth Sunday of Sunday

18th December

8:30 am	Holy Communion
10:30 am	Christingle
6:00 pm	Service of Lessons and Carols

Christmas Day

25th December

8:30 am	Holy Communion
10:30 am	A Service for Christmas

Second Sunday Before Advent

13th November

8:30 am	Holy Communion
10:30 am	Parish Communion and An Act of Remembrance
6:00 pm	Compline

The First Sunday of Advent

27th November

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

The Third Sunday of Sunday

11th December

8:30 am	Holy Communion
10:30 am	Parish Communion
7:00 pm	Compline

Christmas Eve

24th December

5:00 pm	A Crib Service
11:30 pm	First Communion of Christmas

The Circumcision of Christ

1st January

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

Tuesdays 7:30 pm - Compline
Thursdays 11:00 am - Holy Communion
10:30 am on the first Wednesday every month -
Holy Communion is celebrated in the Chapel at Mount Stewart.

Vestry Minutes

Vestry agreed to spend £640 needed to rectify the speaker system in the Church.

The three external benches have been stripped and treated. Use of individual glasses will continue in Holy Communion, in the hope that the Common Cup may be used at Christmas.

Kate Murray has been working hard on behalf of our Safeguarding Trust panel. The names of the panel members will be displayed in the Halls and the Church porch. Kate is hoping that training of the panel members and Sunday School staff will happen before the end of the year. Only Sunday School staff and panel members currently need to be Access cleared again. All hall users must provide risk assessments. Kate will replace the accident book which is no longer fit for purpose.

Mae Burke informed the Vestry that Sunday School will resume on 18 September. Bert and Kate will nip in from time to time to show support for Maggie and Lorna, our leaders. Heather will write to them to acknowledge the invaluable contribution they are making and will purchase some sweets for the children. Sunday School children will participate in the first ten minutes of the Harvest Service and will perform a little pageant at Christmas. Sunday School has received a grant of £200 from the Diocese and Maggie will receive a Diocesan young people's pack.

Bert expressed a need for volunteers to

help provide transport for some people wanting to attend church. Heather gave Bert the names of some people who had volunteered in the Parish survey carried out just before covid.

The Vestry continues the work of purchasing a rectory for our new minister.

Canon Doogan discussed a recent document he had produced on procedures in a parish when a vacancy occurs. This document will be provided to the Parish in due course.

Vestry was reminded that money raised from the Harvest Appeal would be given to the Bishop's Appeal. The Appeal will close at the end of October. The whole thrust of the Harvest this year was produce rather than flowers. Mae expressed her thanks to the parishioners for their generosity and to those who delivered on the Monday morning. Mae also informed Vestry that a couple of past Wardens were going to be helping with pastoral visits.

morning. Mae also informed Vestry that a couple of past Wardens were going to be helping with pastoral visits.

Photos of all past Rectors have been updated in the Church Vestry.

Maureen reported on a successful 'Events Team' meeting. Vestry was very pleased to hear about the 'drop in' coffee mornings and lunches.

Permission for use of the halls was given to the Bridge Club, Cockle Island Boat Club and Bangor Art Club.

Jubilate will purchase a filing cabinet to store its increasing supply of music. The Vestry unanimously decided to purchase a Clavinova to replace the piano in Church.

They also voted unanimously to purchase

the two batteries necessary for the solar power in the halls.

Advent calendars have been purchased and will be advertised on the pew leaflet.

Following Bert's suggestion of making use of banners outside the Church Halls, Vestry members were asked to e-mail the Secretary with ideas.

Clavinova

Would you like to donate?!

Those of you attending Church, or indeed watching online service, cannot fail to have noticed the incredible contribution our singing group Jubilate, has been making to our Sunday services. They have transformed our worship. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the group along with their leaders Maurice and Vanessa and are looking forward to what they do at our Carol Service this year.

The Select Vestry recently approved £2,200 to purchase a Clavinova (digital piano) to be used in Church along with the organ. This will further enhance the choir's contribution to worship.

If anyone would consider gifting the Clavinova, or indeed consider a contribution towards the purchase, please contact Heather, the Vestry Secretary, on 07834 771075.

Thank you!



Harvest Thanksgiving

Our Harvest Thanksgiving services took place on Sunday 2nd October. Rev Tim Wright officiated at the 10.30 service. Faith took the 6:00 pm service to which we welcomed our friends from Groomspoint Presbyterian Church and Cockle Island Boat Club.

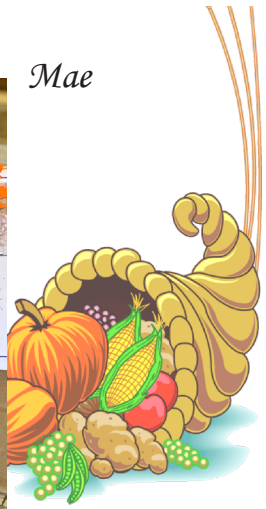
We requested that given the stark rise in fuel and food prices which are facing our communities this winter, we should aim to provide dried and tinned foods, cereal, baby items and the type of items usually sent to food banks. The response was terrific, and the church was filled with such items as well as flowers, chocolates, and fresh fruit. Several carloads were taken off to Storehouse (our local food bank) and Women's Aid the following day.

We did not forget the many members of our congregation who are not able to get out to church, are ill or lonely, in care homes, or who have lost a loved one in recent times. Another group of helpers assisted in making up little gift bags of fruit and chocolates together with a card. These were delivered to the homes of these members the following week.

Thank you to the many members of our congregation who helped in every aspect of our Harvest Thanksgiving, from decorating the church, packing up bags and delivering produce. There are too many people to mention – with one exception. Young Summer McWhinney (Amanda's daughter) came in to our Church on the Monday and used her artistic talents by adding ribbons and bows to the gift bags, illustrating the fact that the gifts are delivered with love.

A decision had been taken earlier in the year that the Harvest Envelope Appeal would focus entirely on the Bishop's projects – Christian Aid in Honduras and Tear Fund in Jordan. We have raised £616 to date, with more still to come in.

Thank you to everyone for the support which you have given me personally in all these church activities for which I have the responsibility to keep going during the Interregnum. It truly demonstrates the love, commitment and indeed teamwork in our Parish and our love for the Lord and his work.



Let's Go Shopping!

Groomsport Parish Church Community Annual Shopping Trip to
Newbridge Silver Outlet and Kildare Village Outlet

Saturday 4th February 2023

DON'T LEAVE IT TOO LATE TO BOOK!

Unbelievably we're back! The date is in the diary for this well-established trip to Kildare Outlet Village. This event is open to ladies AND gentlemen from both inside and outside our Church. Indeed, some regulars come for the craic as well as the shopping! Places are limited and are allocated on a first-come first-served basis. They can be reserved by enclosing £25 in a sealed envelope with your name and telephone number. Leave the envelope with the Church Wardens or make contact with me directly.

The bus has been booked with McAvoy's (toilet on board). Pick up points are Newtownards (7.45 am), Groomsport Parish Halls at 8.00 am and Sprucefield (if required) and the bus will return to the Parish Halls at approximately 8.00 pm. We will stop en route for a quick coffee break at Apple Green and will then stop at Newbridge Silver Outlet for lunch and some shopping. From there we shall spend the afternoon at Kildare Village Outlet.

For further details or to arrange payment, please contact me on 07834 771075.

Heather Pentland



Christmas Events



The village Christmas lights switch on will take place at 7:00 pm, Friday 2nd December. The service will be held in Groomspoint Presbyterian Church followed by the lights 'switch on' at 7:30 pm outside.

Afterwards everybody is invited to supper in the Parish Halls. Music will be provided by Symington Memorial Band. There will be entertainment for the children and a special visitor.

Christmas Events

This year our Christmas celebration event will take the form of a Christmas Afternoon Tea. We will start with a glass of mulled wine at 2:00 pm, followed by a selection of homemade treats around 2.30 pm. We will also run our popular Twelve Days of Christmas Ballot. There will be a few stalls for you to browse and buy gifts, homemade cakes, tray-bakes, jams and chutneys. Entertainment will be provided

by our very own Jubilate. Tickets priced at £10 will be available from the beginning of November. Look out for more news about the event over the next month. In the meantime, you can help by donating any unused gifts. Just leave them in the office any day between 11:00 am and 12 noon. We will be in touch with you in the near future! We are looking forward to seeing you all on 10th December at this event.



Jubilate

We are a small group of enthusiastic amateur singers who manage to sing in tune most of the time! Presently we are 12 strong and associated with Groomspoint Parish Church of which the Select Vestry kindly allows us to use the Church for practice. We are not a church choir and we welcome members from any denomination or none. At present we have a particular need for lower voices, alto,

tenor, and baritone/bass. We specialise in sacred music but are more than happy to sing seasonal or secular items and welcome requests to sing at local events.

If you enjoy singing and good company, give us a shout (07515 699389) or just come along. We practice at 2.30pm on Thursday afternoon in Groomspoint Parish Church which is opposite The Stables.

Walking For Softies

On the last Saturday in September, the Softies headed to Crawfordsburn Country Park.

It was a lovely bright day, but there was a cold northerly wind blowing from the sea. After half an hour, we decided to cut short the walk and aim for Woodlands cafe. It was great to warm up with some hot coffee and of course the obligatory scone. Some people sat outside as the tables were quite sheltered. It was good to catch up with friends and put the world to rights. Our November walk will be to the Titanic Quarter. Read about it in our next magazine.



***If you would like to Join
Walking for Softies then contact
Zandra or Ian Sloan.***

Book Stall

I continue to refill the shelves from our still well-stocked store. Sadly, despite my repeated requests, piles of books continue to be left in the area. We really do not have the space to accommodate any more. Perhaps the bookstall is a victim of its own success, but I do want the area to be welcoming and tidy otherwise, the object of the exercise is limited. I do hope that we can have a book fair before too long and that way we may be able to avail ourselves of more stock, but in the meantime, please do not be tempted to leave any. Many charitable outlets in our area can take books if you really are very keen to have a good clear out. I do understand the frustration believe me! In the meantime, here are some more titles that I have recently found in our store and hope you may enjoy them

The Ladies' Midnight Swimming Club

Faith Hogan

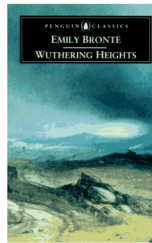


This novel, chosen by the reading group to which I belong, is described as joyful and life-affirming and that just about sums it up. In it, we find three women, each with serious changes and challenges in their lives, brought together through circumstance and each finding their own way of dealing with it. Jo is the catalyst for this. She lives alone in Ballycove and loves her life there, a big part of it being her nightly swim in the icy waters of the Irish Sea. Elizabeth lives locally and is the doctor's wife, newly widowed. Lucy is Jo's daughter, a burnt-out hospital doctor. Jo has discovered medical worries, Elizabeth, investigating her husband's affairs, kept secret until

now, discovers massive debts due to gambling and alcohol, Lucy, divorced and overworked is worried about her teenage son and decides to request a year's leave of absence from work. Lucy comes with her son Niall to visit her mother and the three form a valuable and supportive friendship group. This is a light and pleasant read, with touches of humour and poignancy. I think many will enjoy it.

Wuthering Heights

Emily Brontë



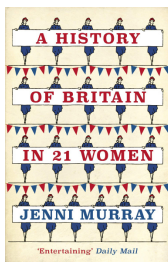
I have read this at least three times in my life and always got something new from it. As a teenager, I was swept away by the grand, passionate romance of the story. Later I admired the writing at a time when such

passions and overt feelings were contrary to the society of the time, and surely far out of the experience of a young woman brought up in a remote vicarage. This time I was overcome by the sheer evil apparent in Heathcliff's wild determination to wreak revenge on those who treated him ill in his early years and who kept him apart from his beloved Cathy. I wept for his innocent victims whilst feeling his overwhelming pain. Nevertheless, I enjoyed reading it again. If you have never read it, do give it a try, it's a wonderful book and a great revealer of the glories and fierceness of the Yorkshire moors.

A History of Britain in 21 Women

Jenny Murray

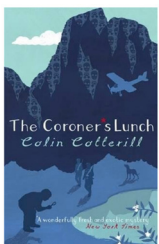
This caught my eye recently in the bookshelves and I thought it was an interesting concept. The compilation of brief biographies is entirely personal to



Jenni Murray as she freely admits that there is much of her in the book. That is not to detract from the value and interest of this effort, I found it fascinating, informative and stimulating. These are admirable, brave, intelligent women to whom women owe a great debt; these are the trailblazers of their time, the first known warrior, the first woman playwright, novelist, doctor, scientist, composer etc, all at a time when those in control - men - believed these roles to be their territory. It was believed, for example, in Victorian England that too much education interfered with a woman's reproductive system! There are women whom you will admire and women whom you may detest, but their impact on their time and in the years to come is certain. We have Queen Elizabeth the first, Jane Austen, Emmeline Pankhurst, Nancy Astor and Mary Quant with many more, some of whom I, to my shame, had never heard of, but their contribution was indisputable. I do not normally enjoy nonfiction as much as a good story, but this is a real exception - highly recommended!

The Coroner's Lunch

Colin Cotterill



This rather unusual title caught my eye and when I read that it was a mystery I immediately decided to read it. Set in Laos it is decidedly exotic and different. The coroner in question is Dr Siri Paiboun a retired doctor who is a very reluctant coroner but has been officially recruited by the dictatorial Marxist-Leninist government, a body which Dr Siri heartily detests. His lunch is

bought each day from a street trader and he takes it usually in the company of an old friend with whom he shares his woes. The story is intriguing and fascinating as he struggles to ensure that justice is done despite all the odds stacked against him. This is very much worth a read.

Old Baggage

Lissa Evans



This is another book recommended by my reading group and has proved to be a joy. Matilda Simpkin has had a dramatic and exciting past but is frustrated at the dullness and lack of purpose that middle age has brought. She had been a militant suffragette, jailed, marched and smashed windows; now life seems rather without verve so she starts up a great plan to educate and stimulate girls and young women stuck in limiting situations, she plans to educate, beyond the confines of the sort of feminine skills normally imparted to girls in that generation, to encourage physical strength and agility, to inspire and encourage self-confidence in them. She is all too painfully aware that the struggle that she and those who joined the suffragette movement fought to gain was in danger of becoming irrelevant in the light of the events of 1914-18. There was an excess of women now and learning genteel feminine skills would be unlikely to help them become independent and self-reliant. This all sound rather "worthy" in the reading but in fact it is a very enjoyable read, filled with wit, acute observation and some very amusing moments. Mattie, as she is known, is a very likeable character, kept within reasonable bounds by her adoring friend Florrie, affectionately known as 'the Flea'!

Florrie lives with her and acts as a companion, and assistant and, unofficially keeps Mattie out of trouble as far as possible, trying to moderate her behaviour and reactions which tend to be extreme. Their lives are turned upside down when present and past collide as Mattie meets the daughter of one of her suffragette friends who has since committed suicide, everything that Mattie has built up is destroyed and she is forced to undergo serious self-assessment and reflection. The language is sparkling and fresh, the observations acute and witty and the story compelling, a really good read.

I would like to take the opportunity to share an idea with you. I try these days when buying books to avoid the temptation to

resort to the obvious online provider. Since Easons closed in Bangor buying online becomes very tempting rather than travelling if one wishes to have a wider selection than is offered in supermarkets. I have started buying books from second-hand providers online and have been very pleasantly surprised by the quality and price of the items which, unlike books on my electronic reader, can be passed on to the bookstall. It seems ethical and sound as we all try to reuse and recycle more. The first, third and fifth books in this article were all bought this way.

Enjoy your reading as the dark nights draw in. At least, apart from the light needed, you don't use electricity when reading!

Carol

Notes



If you know of someone in our parish who has been admitted to hospital, please inform Mae, Bert or Amanda, with their name, hospital/ward and any other relevant information. Canon Simon Doogan, has kindly offered to visit them in hospital. Simon, as our Area Dean has overall pastoral responsibility for our parish until we appoint a new Rector.



Stamps! Please remember to save all the stamps from your Christmas cards and put them in the box in the Church porch or hand to Susan McNair. These stamps are sent to CMS Ireland and are sold on to generate income for the Church mission.

Nodding Heads

*The guns fall silent,
Also the birds
Fluttering, unseen, unheard.*

All sounds cease.

*Bright against the mud
A bud of crimson
Bursts into bloom
The first poppy nods its head*

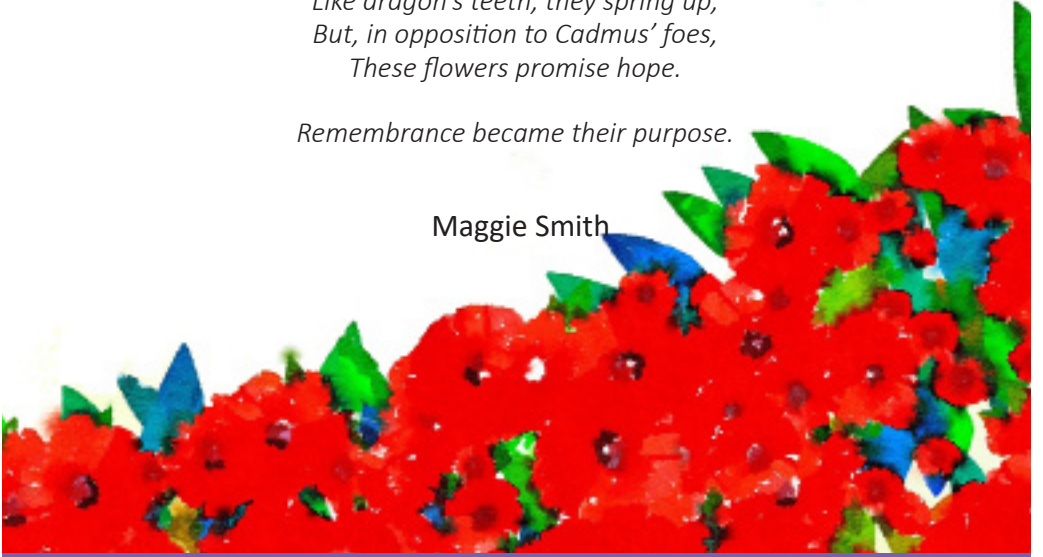
*Then, one by one
And in twos and threes,
Swathes of red.
Each head nodding
Amongst mud and broken trees.
Tokens of blood, bone and flesh
Which lie beneath.*

*In triumph they rise again and again
This is no conquering symbol
Of war or peace.*

*Multitudinous against oppression,
Like dragon's teeth, they spring up,
But, in opposition to Cadmus' foes,
These flowers promise hope.*

Remembrance became their purpose.

Maggie Smith



Being an Election Observer in Sweden

I have had a life-long interest in politics, (my father was a local councillor and my brother-in-law an MEP) so when I saw an opportunity to train to be a volunteer election observer earlier this year, I did not hesitate to find out more. I applied to join Democracy Volunteers, was interviewed on Zoom, completed my training and spent polling day on 5th May accompanied by another volunteer visiting polling stations in North Down, observing the process and submitting my findings. Polling stations are open for 15 hours in Northern Ireland so it was an exhausting, but fascinating, day.

In the meantime, Democracy Volunteers had asked for volunteers for the Swedish elections on 11th September and I had jumped at the opportunity, putting my name forward straight away. But then, following the May experience, the doubts set in. I have Macular Degeneration – why does someone gradually losing her sight volunteer for an observation role that also included completing online forms on her phone? I got Covid in June and still have a wheeze in my chest - would I even have the stamina? Being a bit of a risk taker and living on the basis that ‘Oops is better than if only’ I went anyway and I am so glad that I did.

I thought one democracy operates pretty much in the same way as another so I was unprepared for the differences and how that challenged my way of looking at the democratic process. In Northern Ireland we seem to have elections all the time;

at the time of writing yet another in December seems probable. In Sweden, elections usually occur every four years, always on the second Sunday in September. Voting takes place for the Swedish Parliament, the Regional Council and the Municipalities at the same time. This decentralized approach is considered one of the strengths of the Swedish system along with the manual voting process, proportional distribution of power, and a transparent process. Turnout in elections is high – 87.18% in 2018.

Volunteers from all parts of the UK and several other countries arrived in Stockholm where we had some free time to explore this beautiful city and yes, I ate meatballs whilst ABBA music was played in the background. The following day we had a briefing on the Swedish electoral system and our role, and were deployed to various locations. I went with three other volunteers to the city of Vasteras.

We had a day to orientate ourselves and explore the city. I loved the simple but very spiritual cathedral with its pale wooden interiors and beautiful stained glass, the largest lake in Scandinavia where around 5,000 people join in skating in winter, and the museum and art gallery. (And the parma violet flavoured ice cream).

Then came polling day. My observation partner was a very patient young man from Leicester called Ben and we spent a 12 hour day walking from polling station to polling station observing and sending



A range of buildings were used for polling stations. The first time we were observing in a care home I was anxious that they might not let me out. Much later in the day when we were in another care home I was tired enough to hope they might keep me in.

At the end of the day we were exhausted but it all felt worthwhile. There were two post-election private parties in our hotel and we were allowed to crash one of them, despite the mood not being exactly buoyant. The journey home was also exhausting – I had a seven hour wait between flights in Stansted. But would I do it again? Yes, in a heartbeat.

in our reports. Our findings will be added to those of the other observers and will be included in an overall report on the Democracy Volunteers website.

If you are interested in finding out more about Democracy Volunteers visit www.democracyvolunteers.org

Marian Cinnamon

The system seemed to me, an outsider, quite complex. Voters select ballot papers from a choice of over a hundred parties and have three separate envelopes for the three separate elections. Votes can be for individuals or for parties or for both. Hundreds of millions of ballot papers are printed for a country with a population of 10.35 million (including those too young to vote). Thank goodness for recycling.

I was struck by the friendliness and helpfulness of the people of Sweden. When we arrived at polling stations, even those who had to make calls to check our right to be there were pleasant and helpful and never overly officious. Everywhere we went seemed very clean and spacious.



Thank You, Lord, for Food to Eat

The Revd Michael Burgess continues his series on God in the Arts with a look at 'An Old Woman Saying, Grace'. It now hangs in Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Thank you, Lord, for food to eat.

There is a character in a Russian novel who says, 'Ladies and gentlemen, let us assume that man is not stupid...but if he isn't stupid, he is monstrously ungrateful all the same – a creature that has two legs and no sense of gratitude.' That is certainly true in a world where carping and criticising come more easily than praise and thanksgiving. It is an attitude which rubs off on all of us and is like Aesop's fable of the donkey, who was never happy with his lot, whatever the weather, whatever the season.

Aesop told the story to remind us of the need to cultivate a spirit of gratitude – not to put blinkers on our eyes and be negative about life, but to open both eyes and hearts in thanksgiving for the world in which we live. We do that each time we celebrate the eucharist together. We do it when we say grace before meals. This month's painting, 'An Old Woman Saying Grace' by Nicholas Maes brings this truth to mind.

Maes was a pupil of Rembrandt and he lived from 1632 to 1693. He spent most of his life in Dordrecht in Holland, and, apart from portraits, he delighted in painting women – women spinning or reading the Bible or preparing meals. Here the woman is sitting down to a simple meal of soup, bread, butter and fish. But before she enjoys this food, she puts her hands together and, as simply as the food in front of her, mouths a prayer of thanks to God.

The artist tells us that this offering of prayer was a daily pattern for the woman. For on the ledge at her side lie an open Bible, a lamp and an hourglass, and on a nail some keys. Signs that such prayer can be a light to illuminate the days of our lives and the key to opening our hearts to the kingdom, just like the woman in the painting.

It is a tender moment, both concentrated and intimate. At first glance, there is a tinge of sadness for the table is set just for her. She will eat alone. And then our eyes catch sight of the cat's paw reaching up to enjoy the food as well. Who knows? – something may spill over the edge of the table for the cat to enjoy. Simplicity and humour go hand in hand to remind us all of the need to be thankful. And thankfulness for food can spill over into thanksgiving for all the mercies and gifts that come our way in life.





Thoughts of A Blow In...



I can't quite fathom that the evenings are closing in already and the clocks have gone back. Where did September go? It seemed to pass by in a flash! I am sure that getting back into our routines after the summer, be that for work, school, hobbies or voluntary activities, has made the time speed by. However, if that trend continues, it will certainly help the dark winter months pass more quickly.

But since we're only easing into November, I'm getting ahead of myself. We're still very much in the autumn with the leaves turning and seasonal changes happening all around us. When I was on my walk by the sea the other day, I had to pause when a murmuration of starlings was circuiting directly above me, which was an entrancing, if slightly dizzying sensation!

The changing of the seasons also brings our annual harvest time as celebrated by us in Church.

With that in mind, I recently received a bag of hand-picked apples courtesy of the children next door. Their mum said that they were a trifle over-enthusiastic about getting the apples off the trees and

apologised in advance if the fruit was a bit bruised and bashed. I thought that made the apples somewhat distinctive! And it made me smile to think of the effort and fun that went into gathering their crop.

With autumn now with us and the days flying by, I can't believe that my godson over in England has turned eighteen. He emailed me after his birthday to say he's very busy in his final year at school (with both studies and friends). The fact that he is driving is a great advantage, and I'm sure a great relief to his parents that he's no longer so reliant on Mum and Dad's taxi.

Given he now has wheels, I would refer to him as a young adult, but as he's always loved dinosaurs since he was little, I was reassured that he hasn't changed too much by the fact he asked for the new Jurassic World DVD as his birthday gift!

With all these seasonal themes in mind, I came across this lovely quote by Nathaniel Hawthorne to wish you all a mellow and enjoyable autumn.

Cynthia



*There is no season when such pleasant
and sunny spots
may be lighted on, and produce
so pleasant an effect on the feelings,
as now in October.*

Our Aegean Odyssey

Rhodes! A little gem set into the Aegean Sea, just ten miles south of the Turkish coast, and lying northeast of its larger neighbour Crete.

We spent a week there recently. A first visit. Our fourth-floor apartment overlooked the pavement of tiled roofs and was just a stone's throw from the crystal sea. And overarching everything stretched the endless, unchanging, wonderfully glorious, Grecian blue sky.



Around the corner nestled our local Greek restaurant. Indeed, every street had its own, often many, all with their open fronts, tables spilling onto the pavement, the scents of dishes cooking, and multi-language menus advertising the cosmopolitan mix of hungry customers, seeking to rest their tired feet and sample the local food.

We ate famously. No bacon, egg and chips here, but unashamedly Rhodian fare, all prepared and presented to us by the waiters, with pride, passion and unending friendliness.



The island is breathtakingly rich in its history and cultural diversity. Stretching back as far as the New Stone Age, the centuries have seen the Minoans, Mycenaeans, Persians, Alexander the Great, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, and Italians all leave their own distinctive imprint on its architecture, religion and art.

Our star visit was to the amazingly preserved Olympic stadium, sitting high in the hills overlooking the town and harbour. More than 2000 years old, yet still retaining the tiers of granite seating and its oval track, we sat and watched as a present-day athlete ran around the track, just as his predecessors would have done millennia before. Never had the unchanging essence of time, of ghosts past yet still present, felt so real to us at that moment.

The ruined Temple of Apollo lay further up, its aged stone steps worn smooth by centuries of pagan worshippers, hoping to placate their gods and seek their assurance of health, prosperity, good harvests and victory over their enemies.



The narrow cobbled streets and alleyways, lined with traditional tavernas and the inevitable gift shops, buzzed and echoed with the sound of foreign accents and the plodding feet of tour groups, disembarked from cruise liners berthed in the ancient harbour. The harbour's narrow entrance was once straddled by the legendary Colossus of Rhodes, a Wonder of the Ancient World but long since gone and is now left with two modest stone statues to mark the place where the giant's stone feet defiantly stood. It would be almost impossible to overstate the emotional presence of Rhodes and its impact on one's senses. Indeed it is probably truer to say that Rhodes is as much a personal encounter, as it is a place to visit.

The medieval town of Rhodes was almost overwhelming. The fort and castle were built and remodelled by the crusading Knights of Saint John. With its encircling stone wall stretching two and a half miles, broken at intervals by arched gateways and towers, the town has rightly been made a World Heritage Site of startling historic presence.

Ian & Zandra



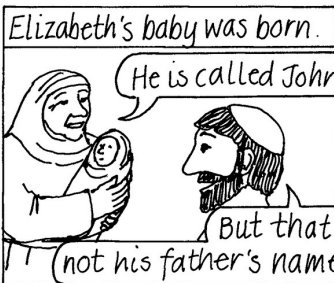
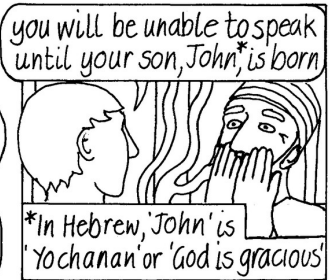
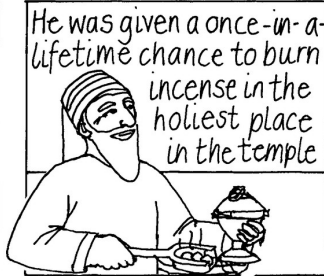
**Travel is the
only thing you buy
that makes you richer.**

Bible Bite

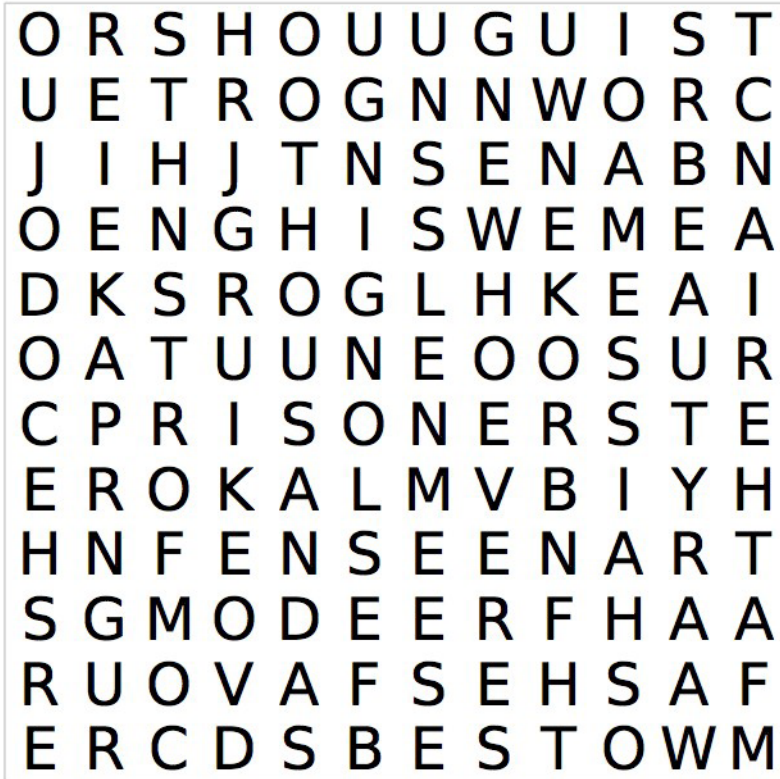
A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke ch. 1 verses 1-25 & 57-80

The Romans had invaded Israel and still ruled it. Zechariah and Elizabeth were an old childless couple living in the hill country.



Just for Fun



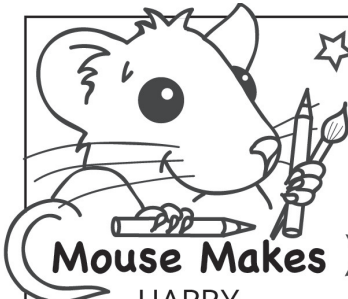
Christmas is nearly here! Two thousand years ago the Jews were longing for the coming of their Messiah. The Old Testament had promised that when He came, He would preach good news to the poor, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, comfort all who mourn and to bestow on his people a crown of beauty instead of ashes. Jesus did all those things. He was and is the Son of God, and whoever has seen Him has seen the Father. Whoever believes in Him will have the best gift of all – His Spirit within them, which gives them eternal life.

Messiah
Broken
Heart
Freedom
Darkness

Favour
Prisoners
Comfort
Mourn
Bestow

Crown
Beauty
Ashes
Son
God

Seen
Father
Whoever
Longing
Thousand



Mouse Makes

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Read the Christmas story in **Luke 2:1-21**.

Answer the questions, colour the picture and colour one star each day until Christmas.

Where was Mary's baby born?
Why were Joseph and Mary there?

What did Mary dress her baby in?

Where did Mary lay her baby and why?

Why were the shepherds afraid?

What good news did the angel tell?

What did the shepherds do after they had seen the baby?

Who appeared praising God, what did they say?

G
L
J O Y
M R C
S A Y G P
O N V O J

G B A B Y N G O O D A B L F
V O S H E P H E R D S A V I O U R
D A Y T M A R Y N E N F R R O
S C H R I S T E P G L T D
A L A I D R W H E O H
E P R A I S E L C
H E I V A L L S K
E E A N I G H T O L D
S M C N D E C R E E B
E A E I
E T



ALL • DECREE • JOSEPH • DAVID • BETHLEHEM • MARY • BIRTH • SON • LAID • MANGER
 INN • SHEPHERDS • FLOCK • NIGHT • LORD • GLORY • GOOD NEWS • JOY • DAY
 SAVIOUR • CHRIST • SIGN • BABY • GOD • PEACE • ANGELS • GO • SEE • TOLD • PRAISE

