

DEC 23 - JAN 24

GROOMSPORT PARISH CHURCH

# CONTACT

[www.groomsportparishchurch.org](http://www.groomsportparishchurch.org)



# From The Pulpit

## *From our Minister, Elliot Swattridge*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On the morning of Tuesday 17th October, as we took Wesley the labrador for his morning walk, we were ushered into a glorious display of colour. At 7:42am I took this photo when the vibrancy was mesmerising, reflected in the surface water on the sand. Red skies absolutely amaze me, that so much profound beauty, dynamic, bright, gentle yet roaringly sublime, can be poured out in the widest canvas imaginable- the celestial sphere above us. And all this without any entrance fee, tickets, prebooking or limitations- simply wanton beauty and glory blazed over the world for all to see.

We see from this ordinary yet wondrous meteorology that God is a fountain of infinite beauty and so can pour this sublimity out into nature as often as He pleases without ever running short.

The weather is a favourite topic for beach dog walkers, and by one man were reminded of the phrase, "Red sky in morning, Sailor's warning". The red comes from the clouds high in the atmosphere, acting like mirrors over the horizon to catch the early dawning crimson hues of the fast-approaching sunrise- signalling that the good weather is passing into the east and, perhaps, rain is to come.

Jesus even references this millenia-old 'sign of the times' in Matthew 16:3-4-

"When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.

That ominous phrase "signs of the times", it fills me with wonder! For while we may be able to forecast the physical weather, have we got any idea whatsoever of the spiritual forecast? What is to come in this turbulent, confusing, sometimes sublime yet often cruel world?

This is another reason why I so love the Word of God. Into a vacuum of understanding, God speaks into our spiritual meteorology. And so when we read this in Isaiah 44:3...

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

...it is like a "spiritual weather forecast". It is like the red sky ahead, promising long-awaited rain. "The night is nearly over; the day is almost here." (Romans 13:12).

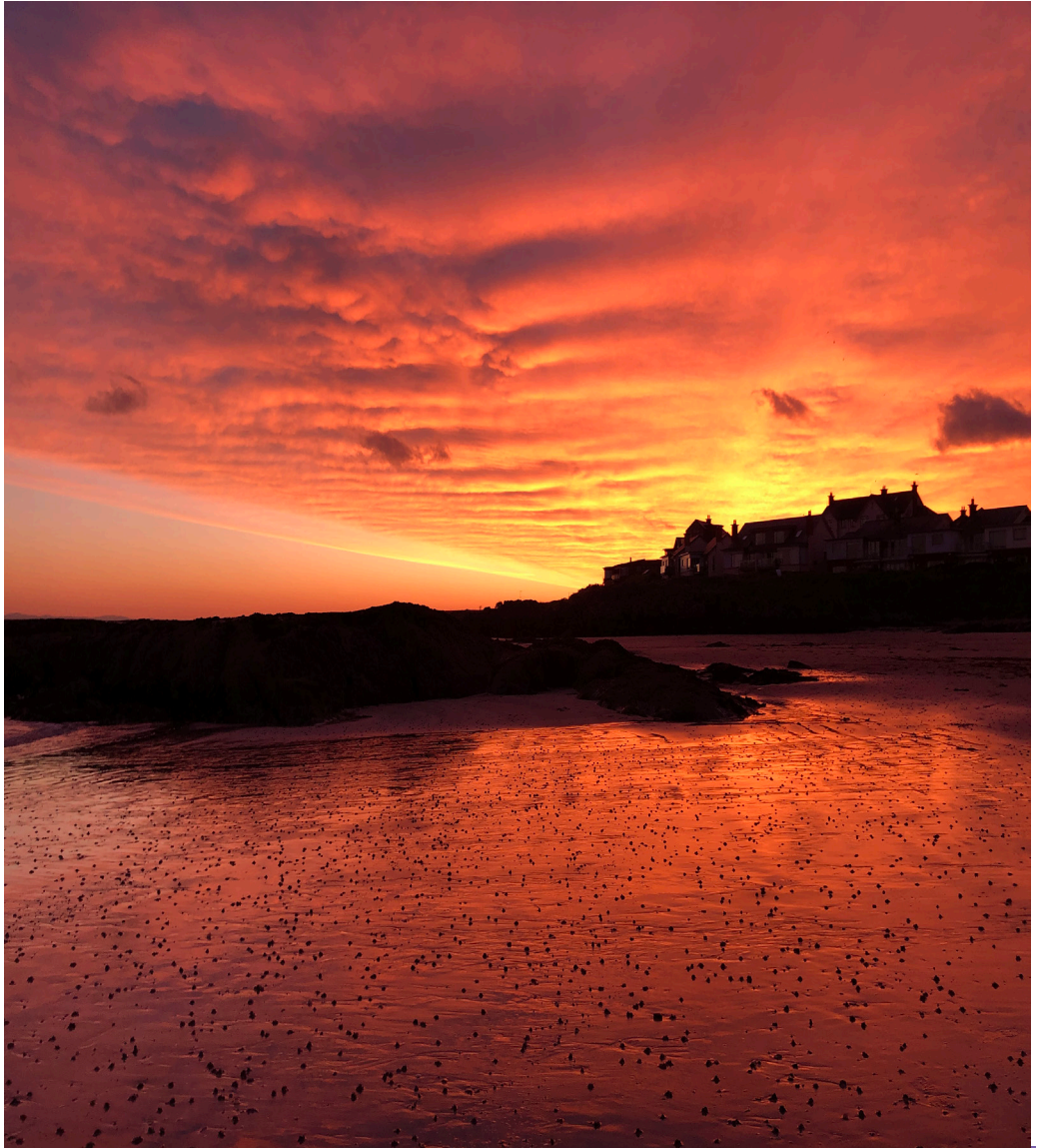
And amongst us right now, in little ways we see little clouds, like mackerel sky, glowing red on the horizon- little ways in which God is at work even now. I have been so delighted to see even little green shoots of this new life in so many aspects of our time together as a church family in

the last few months. He is at work amongst us, beginning in little clouds of life, promising a beautiful future full of the rain of His Spirit and the flourishing of new life- if we would only fix our eyes on Jesus, praying for Him to send His Spirit

and connect us to His new life- so that we would not miss the glorious beauty above!

With so many blessings to you all,

*Elliott Swattridge*



# Contact Us

## Minister

Elliot Swattridge  
elliotsportsport@gmail.com

## The Rector's Warden

Bert Smith  
bert@groomsportparishchurch.org

## The People's Warden

Zandra Sloan  
zandra@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 Administrator

Ashley Rogan  
028 9127 1311  
gpcoffice@btinternet.com

## Sunday Fun Club

Maggie Townsley  
maggie@groomsportparishchurch.org

## Verger / Caretaker

Susan Moore  
028 9127 1311

## Gift Aid Secretary

Ashley Rogan  
028 9127 1311

## Church Hall Bookings

Gordon Boyd  
gpcoffice@btinternet.com

## Parish Archivist

Barry Greenaway  
barry@groomsportparishchurch.org

## Hall Matters

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

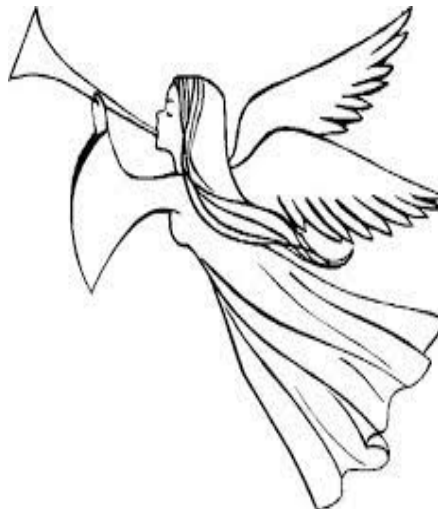


NIC103258



The Parish Halls  
Main Street  
Groomsport  
Co Down  
BT19 6JR

028 91271311  
gpcoffice@btinternet.com





# December and January 23/24

## The First Sunday of Advent

*3rd December*

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

*Coffee in the church hall after the 10.30 service.  
Hosted by David & Dorothy McKnight and Trevor &  
Jenny Craythorne.*

## The Second Sunday of Advent

*10th December*

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

## The Third Sunday of Advent

*17th December*

8:30 am	Holy Communion
10:30 am	Service of the word
6:00 pm	Lessons and Carols by Candlelight

## The Fourth Sunday of Advent

*24th December*

5:00 pm	Crib Service Assembling our Nativity set together
11:30 pm	First Communion of Christmas by Candlelight

## Christmas Day

*25th December*

8:30 am	Traditional Christmas Holy Communion
10:30 am	Christmas Celebration for all

## The First Sunday of Christmas

*31st December*

10:30 am	Service of the Word
----------	---------------------

*There will be no 8:30 am or 6 pm service.*

## The First Sunday after The Epiphany The Baptism of Christ

*7th January*

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

*Coffee in the church hall after the 10:30 am  
service. Hosts TBC.*

## The Second Sunday after The Epiphany

*14th January*

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

## The Third Sunday after The Epiphany

*21st January*

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

## The Fourth Sunday after The Epiphany

*28th January*

8:30 am	Holy Communion
10:30 am	Morning Prayer

## 9:30 am - Sunday Fun Club

(Not on 24th Dec, 31st Dec or 7th Jan)

## Tuesday 6 pm - Prayer for Revival (Halls)

## 7 pm - Compline

**10.30 am on the first Wednesday of every month - Holy Communion is celebrated at the Chapel in Mount Stewart.**

## Thursday 11 am - Holy Communion

# OMA - Ayee Gretty's Story



My name is Ayee Gretty, I'm 23 years old and am here to share my story with you today.

My life has been a life of uncertainties and doubts about what might become of me, as a young girl, my dream was always to be a fashion designer, but life was so challenging and all these experiences altered my life after my dad could not work anymore because of sickness, so I left home town to go look for what to do so that I could help my father my younger sisters, and our one brother. and doing so I ended up with the wrong group of young ladies, I started to follow what they did, drinking, and going to clubs at night. so many ways that I lost hope in my dreams, and I could wake up very early in the morning footing a distance away in search of what to do so that I could feed myself, and knowing that when I fail to get anything to do within that day, I would know hunger awaits me. What seemed like a calamity in the eyes of others was my new normal, this became my way of life for about 3 years.

In March 2022, I decided to travel back to Gulu where I was. while I was there I met someone who later told me about OMA Foundation, a life-changing organization devoted to helping young hopeless girls and child mothers through life-skills training, mentorship, and discipleship, I was eager to know more about the Charity organization and join them if possible.

So without delay, we organized and came to meet the director of the school who welcomed us joyfully, and asked questions about me and later he asked me to go and meet with Madam Gloria who is also our teacher, after talking with them they gave me a form to fill in my details. I went back home and did what I was asked to do then returned the form, hopefully waiting for their call if I was picked among the other girls, after two days I received a call from the organization I was overwhelmed with joy knowing that now my life will never remain the same.

Our classes run from Monday to Friday, every Monday, and Wednesday and Friday were lean Life-Skills lessons for both tailoring and hairdressing class, in our tailoring class, we are taught how to sew ladies' designs, men's outfits, and children's wear, and we also learned perfection and creativity, these sessions made me discover the hidden talent within me.

Every Tuesday and Thursday, we do our discipleship class and do savings too, through our savings group I was able to acquire a small capital for my bag business, and at the moment can make a few items where I sell and can take care of myself, pay rent, feed, and medication all these capital I got it from our Thursday savings group that started within the OMA Girls. through discipleship, I have learned how to stay close to God through prayers and fellowship with my follower girls at school, I know that nothing shapes my life more than a commitment I made to give my life to Christ Jesus while I was at OMA and I have never looked back on the choice I choose. We become whatever we are committed to All in all, OMA Foundation is making me live a purpose, which is giving me meaning in life, simplifying my life, focusing and motivating it, and above all, preparing me for eternity. Thank you so much OMA Foundation for the opportunity Made Available for young girls like me.

OMA Foundation being a Christian origination, we always have our morning devotion before classes and every Tuesday, Thursdays we have our followership and Bible studies and these have helped me spiritually. We were also blessed to have breakfast after our classes and lunch that's tea without bread, lunch beans, and posho,( corn meal) and i thank God for Groomsport Parish Church and for partnership with OMA Foundation to take good care of us and giving us a safe place where we can lean more about God and share our stories with the world.

God Bless You Groomsport Parish Church Leadership and the members of the entire church.



# October Vestry Minutes

Elliot began the October meeting asking Vestry members to write a short prayer on some paper chains, and those who were comfortable, read theirs aloud.

At the November meeting Elliot read from Galatians Chapter 5 and lit a candle for the duration of the meeting to remind us that God's spirit was with us.

It was agreed Elliot would be able to use the wooden shed at the back of the hall for storage of toys.

Barry reported that the Art group will wait until the Spring to exhibit at the time of the Events Team Exhibition. The issue of lighting has been put on the long finger.

Elliot was delighted at the willingness of the Diocese to help promote and participate in the new Sunday Fun Club. Elliot is able to report a gradual increase in numbers and is very grateful to Maggie Townsley for her enthusiasm.

Elliot has also spoken to Keith Gardiner from Church House. Keith has made Elliot aware of possible grants which might be available, especially if the idea of a Mum, and toddlers group goes ahead possibly on a Wednesday or Friday morning in the New Year. He is most grateful to Ian and Zandra Sloan for helping him put together the grant application. We will also approach the congregation for nearly new used toys.

In addition, he is exploring the idea of

reconnecting with those young people who were most recently confirmed and is thinking about having them to his home twice a month on a Sunday evening 7.30pm – 9.00pm. He is starting with a pizza night on 2 December.

However, Elliot has stressed to the Vestry that it is not just about young people – there is perhaps more current publicity because of forming new groups, but he wants the older members of the congregation to feel equally valued and is delighted at the number of events that are available to them.

At the October meeting under Health and Safety, the issue of the step at the back of the Church was raised. Gordon was charged with contacting relevant authorities. The Glebe Wardens and Gordon recommended signage and lighting to the Vestry rather than a ramp. He will also look at what can be done about the very bright light as people leave Church in the dark. In addition, Gordon has taken over from David McKnight as Hall Manager. In this role he will make enquiries with the fire Authority to check numbers authorised to use our Halls.

Barry explained that because of the installation of solar panels, we are now self sufficient from late spring through to autumn. Barry asked permission to place a display cabinet in the Church to display Archive material. As Vestry are concerned about the space it will take up, further investigations will take place.



# *From the Registers*

## ***Holy Baptism***

***15 October 2023***

**Freya Morrow.** *Daughter of Aaron and Emma Morrow*

## **Holy Rest**

***25 August 2023***

**Kathleen Cree** ,*wife of George Cree*

***18 September 2023***

**Matthew Meehan** *husband of Frances Meehan*

**Frances Meehan** *wife of Matthew Meehan*

***27 September 2023***

**Mary Wright,** *wife of John Wright*

***14 November 2023***

**Marigold Milliken,** *wife of the late Norman Milliken*

***16 November 2023***

**Barbara Anne West-Hurst,** *mother of Hilary*

***24 November 2023***

**George Cree,** *husband of the late Kathleen Cree*



# *"I wanna wake up in a city that never sleeps"*

*By Duncan Pollock*

And now I have! New York turns out to be everything that you've ever believed about the Big Apple: big, brash, brassy and painfully expensive! Eighteen months ago, Groomsport Parish left some money, as a retirement gift, at Oasis travel in Bangor to allow myself and Janice the opportunity to take a trip to our destination of choice. We chose New York and it didn't disappoint.

All the iconic landmarks were there, bigger than life and twice as natural. The Empire State Building – the star of so many great films; An Affair to Remember, King Kong, Elf, Sleepless in Seattle. You zoom to the observation deck on the 86th floor, in a lift so speedy and so quiet, it makes your ears pop. You can go higher to the 102nd floor, if you wish (for another \$20 or so. We didn't). The view is spectacular. A guide on the 86th floor points out major landmarks, and tells you about all the famous people he's met there. I asked him if he recognised me. "Why, are you famous?" he asked. We were to learn that New Yorkers don't seem to have much sense of irony.

Here's a startling fact. Construction on its 102 storeys began in March 1930 and was completed 13 months and 1 week later. Makes you wonder about Queen's Parade in Bangor.

"We'll go to Coney and eat baloney on a roll..." sang Ella Fitzgerald. Coney Island stars in Men in Black 3 and is just like Barry's of Portrush, but so, so much

bigger. The amusements and the rides were all closed as the season was over, and it looked a little sad – like Portrush in the rain. "And tell me what street compares with Mott Street in July?" continued Ella. Mott Street is in the middle of China Town and there is an all-pervasive aroma of Chinese cooking. Not too bad in October, but must be pretty overpowering on a hot humid summer's day!

And in the middle of Manhattan, in the middle of the city that never sleeps, is Central Park, where Father Christmas crash landed in "Elf". It seemed to go on for ever. We walked from the south side to the reservoir in the middle. It was a lovely warm afternoon and people were jogging, riding their bikes, hiring pony and traps, enjoying picnics or just sitting and taking in the view. The big city seemed a million miles away.

The 9/11 memorial was surprisingly moving. Surprising, because New York is brash and noisy, and there are lots of people out to make a fast buck out of the tourists, and yet there was such a reverential air at Ground Zero. Standing and imagining the obscene events of that day was too much, and we came away chastened. And yet, as you walk away from the two memorials, identical and one for each tower, you are soon back into the hurly burly of downtown Manhattan. We went to Wall Street and there nestling behind the Stock Exchange, amongst the skyscrapers is what looks

like a tiny little Church, Trinity Church. Like St Patrick's Cathedral on 5th Avenue, it is really rather large, but simply dwarfed by its surroundings.

It is estimated that one million people crowd in to Times Square on New Year's Eve to see the iconic ball drop to herald the New Year. We were there on an ordinary October day, and that was busy enough for us. Off Times Square is Broadway, and we took the opportunity to take in a show, "Chicago". Simply Brilliant! Our hotel was described as the Rui Plaza, Times Square, but it was a good 10 blocks away.

We were lucky enough to fly back business class to Dublin. And that was probably one of the highlights of the week!



Waiting for Meg Ryan (and or Tom Hanks)

The cabin crew laid our little table, with a proper table cloth; gave us proper napkins with proper cutlery and proper china plates. I asked her when she had finished, "What no candelabrum?" "I don't think that would be quite safe on an aeroplane, sir." She responded. You see. No sense of irony!

What a fabulous week. The only other experience that comes close to our week in New York was seeing the Taj Mahal in all its glory. I can't thank Groomsport Parish enough for making it possible. The memories will endure.

"The great big City's a wondrous toy  
just made for a girl and boy  
We'll turn Manhattan



Lest We Forget. The 9/11 memorial at the World Trade Centre.



God and Mammon Trinity Church Wall Street

# *The Innkeeper* by Carol Walters

Business isn't usually overwhelming, particularly at this time of the year but my goodness when Augustus, the Roman emperor, decreed that a census be taken and everyone had to return to their home town to be registered, things changed and I have never been so busy. They came from all over, many of them having travelled for days to get here. Of course they were exhausted and pretty soon so was I, and the few people I had to help. The wife was rushed off her feet feeding them all. The place was packed, and, disappointingly, I had to start turning people away. It's all money and will tide us over the lean times.

Then, one evening, having repeatedly turned family after family away a couple arrived at the door. I was about to give them the same treatment, then I saw the young woman, she was clearly in a pretty desperate state, she was very young and looked close to her time, her husband was obviously very concerned about her and pleaded with us, he was desperate. My wife came to the door and she said we couldn't just turn them away, they looked so much in need of help and kindness. All I could think of was the barn where I keep the animals, at least their presence makes it a bit warmer. We took them there and cleared out the manger and put fresh straw in for bedding, they had to put the baby somewhere. We shifted a few stooks of grain to make the mother comfortable and brought them some water. Then we left them to it. What else could we do?

During the night the baby was born and the wife went out to see if they were alright. She came rushing back to me to come with her. I have never seen anything like it, there was something remarkable about this baby, I couldn't begin to explain it, I'm a simple man but I knew something very special had happened. Then, out of the blue all these shepherds turned up, saying they'd seen an angel who had told them that the baby there was the Messiah, the Lord. The angel had even told them where to find the baby and that He was in a manger! Suddenly, my confusion cleared and I began to understand why I had known that something special had happened.

I still can't quite explain it, but I tell you it made a difference to me and the wife. In these times when we are ruled by our Roman leaders you learn to be careful when talking about your beliefs, they have very different ones and are not always tolerant of ours, though some are. I'm not careful anymore, I don't care who knows it, I tell everyone that I have seen the Messiah and it has changed me, I am so glad we found room in our stable.





*There is of course no mention of an innkeeper in Luke's Christmas story but the innkeeper has been a staple of Christmas cards, classic art and Nativity school plays. Someone must have been there to tell Mary and Joseph that 'There was no place for them in the inn'. So this is a fictionalised account of what we must assume happened. The innkeeper is often depicted as harsh and negative, but of course we have no way of knowing. I hope I will be forgiven for allowing him to have a trace of humanity. Carol*

## Groomsport's Remembrance Parade

It was so wonderful to have all 3 ministers from the three Groomsport church families coming together to be part of leading Groomsport Remembrance Service. Thank you to Barry for capturing the day.

"When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today."



# Effective Giving

If you are new to our Parish, you are very welcome. Whether you are new or a long standing Parishioner, you might wish to take just a moment to consider how best you could contribute to our work and Christian outreach financially.

The Free Will Offering (FWO) envelopes each Sunday are always popular. However a growing number of parishioners have instead been using Standing Orders with their banks or building societies. The great benefit of Standing Orders is that they are regular, easy to arrange and help our Parish to better manage its financial commitments.

But perhaps the biggest improvement you could make is by Gift Aiding your donations. Gift Aid enables our Parish to claim from the taxman, 25p for every £1 donated under the scheme. This means, for example, that we can claim back £25 for every £100 donated under Gift Aid! Over the years Gift Aid has been and remains a central and crucial source of income for our small Parish. Without it we would struggle financially. For us it is a virtual lifesaver.

So please give this some thought. If you would like to know more, without commitment, please ask the Wardens and they will be happy to help.

*giftaid*

## Gift Aid explained...

If you make a donation and you tell us that you pay tax in the UK we can claim back 25% from the Government. **That's 25p for every £1 you give.**



# Kildare Shopping Trip

After a rather slow start to numbers this year, a band of 34 happy shoppers made their way to Kildare Village via Newbridge Silver Outlet on 18 November, excited that they were hitting the shops on a Black Friday weekend. After my concerns about whether to take a small or large coach, I was rather glad to have chosen the latter – as the extra space was needed, just to accommodate the numerous shopping bags being carried on to the bus – probably the largest number of purchases ever.

This was our first time using Coach Connections and I cannot speak highly enough of the company, especially our driver Gregory, who could not do enough to assist myself and all the shoppers- 33 ladies and one man! He even rang me the day before to ensure he knew exactly

what we had planned, and also rang me the Monday after the trip to thank the shoppers for their generous tip!

Five minutes after departure I received a text from Elliot to apologise that he and Wesley had just missed us, but they had waved to us as we passed at 8.00am. However, no one could believe that at 8.20pm on a cold, dark Saturday night, outside the halls, there were Elliot and Wesley to welcome us home – described by one of the shoppers as the “icing on the cake!”

All of those who did not belong to the Parish, enjoyed themselves so much, they want to be contacted the next time we run a bus trip!

All in all, a very successful day.

*Heather*

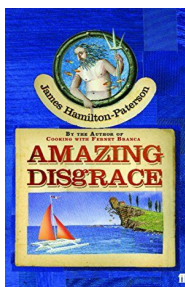


I have recently been looking at our old accounts and records and amazingly discovered that the Book Shelves have been going since February 2008! In that time many books have changed hands and given, I hope, pleasure to many of you. That, of course is the main aim, but incidentally during that time we have collected over £3,500.00 in donations, equally shared between church funds and CMS. A big thank you to all who have contributed. This does not of course include the many book fairs that we have had over the years which are recorded separately by the treasurer. The days are growing shorter at this time of the year and the weather is not so kind to those of us who like to garden and walk so why not take a look at all the wonderful books there are on the shelves? This is definitely the time of year for curling up with a good book- and all in a good cause!

### **Amazing Disgrace** **by James Hamilton-Paterson**

I scarcely know how to introduce this book to you, it is unlike anything that I have ever read. The author is better known for his non-fiction books including a study of Ferdinand Marcos and the Philippines.

'Amazing Disgrace' is the story of a self-obsessed, vain, pretentious and frustrated writer who sees himself as the chronicler of musical luminaries, film directors, conductors and the like. Instead, he finds



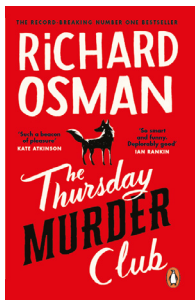
himself reduced to acting as a ghost writer for minor "celebrities" such as skiers and Formula 1 drivers; people with, as the writer describes them "the brains of an earwig" who are incapable of stringing together a coherent sentence for themselves. As the story starts, Gerald Samper, our anti-hero, has just finished his latest attempt to whitewash the "lump of human coal", a "nut-brown amputee in her late fifties" who is in fact a lone yachtswoman who lost an arm to a shark thus gaining great news coverage. She is in fact extremely susceptible to cranky theories about the ocean and her relationship with it, which is revealed as the story progresses.

This is interspersed with reflections from Gerald on his apparently idyllic life in a villa in the hills of Tuscany, where, when not writing and drinking Prosecco he cooks extraordinary dishes, some of the recipes for which are in the book. I doubt whether any of you will be trying his Ghost Soufflé, Death Roe or Badger Wellington (yes it's made with fillet of badger and details of the recipe are given in full!) He is as critical of food from elsewhere as he is fulsome in his enthusiasm for his own cooking, describing instant coffee as "brown dust" and squid as "fan-belt off cuts"!

I need hardly add that this is a very funny book, though not funny in any conventional sense. I thoroughly enjoyed it but suspect that it is not for everyone.



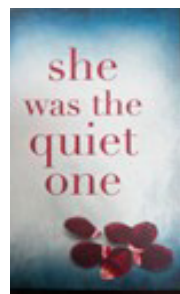
## The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman



Regular readers will remember that I reviewed this book in the January issue of Contact and I take the liberty of repeating that review now. You will probably have heard of this as before its launch it was very

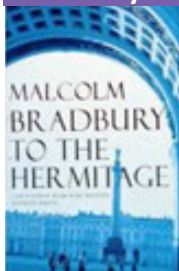
heavily publicised. Possibly you have read it. If not, do give it a go. Set in a very comfortable retirement village four new friends have added to the list of available activities enjoyed by these active retirees. They have formed a club which meets on Thursdays and investigates old unsolved murder cases. These are not just any old people. Amongst them we have a nurse, a trade union leader, a psychologist and an ex MI5 officer whose remaining influence proves to be invaluable to the group. The characters are delightful, the story very convincing as a detective story and the humour wonderful. Richard Osman has ticked all the boxes for me, I loved every minute of this book and was sorry when I came to the end. As Val McDermid has said it's a "warm, wise and witty warning never to underestimate the elderly"! I add this again as around the time of the recent Book Fair, this copy came into my hands. This particular copy is a signed copy, though I have to say, in all honesty, that if you didn't know who had signed it, you wouldn't be able to discern the signature! However it will be on the top shelf with all the other books once the latest Contact is issued.

## She Was the Quiet One by Michele Campbell



Described as a 'Twisted story of sibling rivalry loaded with breathless suspense', this has had some very good reviews but I have to say that I was not enormously impressed by it. It is a quick, light read but I found myself feeling that I was reading a teen book. Bel and Rose Enright are fraternal teenage twins and as unlike in personality as they are in appearance. They have come through a difficult time since their mother died and their seldom seen paternal grandmother takes responsibility for them, bringing them across the states to live with her prior to packing them off to a prestigious boarding school. This school brings out the tensions between them as Rose is academic and ambitious, Bel is a rebel. But as I said, although some of the story is told from the perspective of the newly appointed wife of the head of their dorm, the rest is told from each of the girls' perspective and feels like something for a younger audience. I maybe being unfair- you decide!

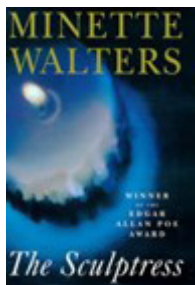
## To the Hermitage by Malcolm Bradbury



This is a very different book and not a quick read although it is wonderfully rewarding if you stick with it. It tells the story of two men separated by two hundred years. The

first it is a novelist who is invited to Stockholm and Russia on an academic seminar called the Diderot project. The second is the French philosopher Denis Diderot who is summoned to St Petersburg to the court of Catherine the great who clearly considers herself to be an intellectual and loves to have a tame philosopher to hand. The book is full of diversions which could annoy as they slow down the progress of the two stories but I found them fascinating. I learnt a great deal about the progressive and liberal nature of Swedish society, about the workings of the court of Catherine the Great, about the characters who join our contemporary and anonymous novelist who travel with him on the Diderot project and even members of the crew of the rather strange vessel which transports them. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and appreciated the wry but very academic humour with which I read it whilst readily admitting that many of the references went over my head and I frequently referred to 'Mr Google'!

### **The Sculptress by Minette Walters**



Again, a complete contrast. My namesake writes a great thriller and this is no exception. The crime this time has already happened and the apparent killer 'The Sculptress' is in prison. Olive Martin is the

criminal, greatly overweight and distinctly unlovable, five years into her twenty five year sentence she leads a lonely life in

prison where she is known to all, inmates and staff as the sculptress. Ros Leigh is a struggling author who has not managed to produce any work for some time and her frustrated agent, concerned that she will lose her publisher forces her into action by setting up a meeting with Olive, hoping that a biography or exposé will emerge. Reluctant to write a gory headline grabbing story, Ros delves and gradually exposes a vulnerable and likeable woman in Olive, she also begins to question her guilt as she uncovers several inconsistencies in the reporting and police conclusions. Complicated further by a growing romantic attachment to the retired police officer who had dealt with the case, this is a detailed and gripping story and the end will definitely leave you thinking.....

It seems terribly early to be saying this but I wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas. Enjoy your reading and don't forget I am now accepting a few donations of books. Fiction only please or children's books or books related to the Christian Faith for our Faith section.

Carol



# First Response Course

It is thanks to Pauline and her hard working team that over £1000 was raised from the regular coffee/lunches. It was decided that this should be spent on a defibrillator for the Church. This is now installed in the Vestry corridor. By coincidence Pauline's son Colin has been a paramedic for many years and he agreed to hold a First Response Course.

The first part of the morning was devoted to explaining what happens if a person goes into heart failure and included some videos of the defibrillator which we had purchased. Showing us how that works

The second part was about heart attacks and CPR. We were all invited to resuscitate the very well dressed Dummy which Colin had brought.

As you can see from the photos our minister Elliot was brave enough to try this. A big thanks must go to Colin for giving up his precious off duty to teach us very useful lessons in the use of the defibrillator and CPR, and all done with enthusiasm and lots of humour.

*Kate*



## Our Back-to-Front Church

Anglican and pre-reformation churches are traditionally built facing east, that is with the Altar/Holy Table set at the eastern end of the building. Visitors to Groomsport Parish Church might notice that it appears to be built the wrong way round! The Altar/Holy Table is at the western end and the organ console at the east. Thereby hangs a tale.

Back in 1842 when Groomsport Church was built it was an oblong structure, oriented east-west with tower and entrance porch attached. The Altar/Holy Table was placed, as was customary, at the eastern end, beneath the tripartite window. Later stained glass was installed representing the Transfiguration and in memory of John William Perceval Maxwell.

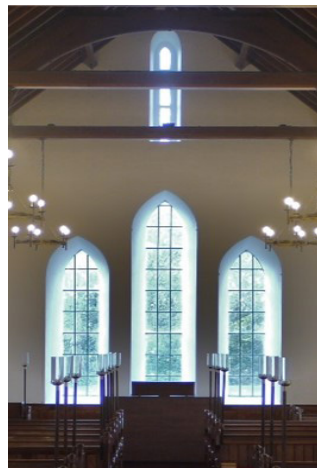
In around 1909, in order to increase the number of pews to provide for a rising congregation, it was decided to add a Chancel to the east end. Consternation resulted when it was found that this would infringe the right of way which ran alongside the Church grounds, a right of way which is still there.

The solution was to break tradition and build the Chancel at the west end. The stained glass was carefully removed and re-installed as it is today. Thanks to the 2017 Refurbishment the East Window has been restored in all its glory.

Groomsport Parish Church is therefore unique in this respect – especially when the evening sun blazes through that Great West Window.

Remember ! The Parish Archive is always ready to receive information and artifacts adding to our Parish heritage. Email or phone: we are here.

Barry [barry@groomsportparishchurch.org](mailto:barry@groomsportparishchurch.org)  
or  
phone 02891271311 to leave a message





# *Thoughts of a blow in* by Cynthia

The clocks have gone back, the days are getting shorter. We've dug out our winter coats for outdoor wear and indoors, we're putting on extra layers of woolly jumpers to keep combat the cold. At this gloomy time of year, Christmas is on the horizon as a bright point. I'm not talking about the commercial aspect of the festival, which seems to begin earlier each year, sometimes from late summer. Once Halloween is over, it's like a signal for the frenzy to begin. From then on, the shop shelves are bunged with every Christmas item you could imagine. If we can try to ignore that sense of forced cheer and pressure, however persistent it might be, we can tap into that sense of joy and expectation that the true meaning of Christmas brings in the depths of our winter.

The sense of togetherness, both in church and with our friends and family, is always so important, particularly as we become more isolated in the winter months, dashing from our cars to our houses with only a wave at the neighbours. It's generally too cold and wet to linger for a chat like we would in the lighter months.

However, there's always the odd surprise visit to keep us on our toes. At mid-evening on Halloween, I heard a knock at the front door. I hadn't expected any callers (next door's children were away for half term), so I hadn't any sweets to hand. Opening the door, I found two children I didn't recognise, looking resplendent in their Halloween costumes. I felt so mean having to admit that I had nothing for them! They promised to call again next year, and I'll make sure that I'm well prepared.

After many years of writing this article for the parish magazine, it seems the right time to pass the baton to the next blow-in. I'd like to thank you all for putting up with my ramblings and it really has been a pleasure to do my bit in this way. I'll sign off with some words from Ada V. Hendricks that encapsulate the meaning of the Christmas message. Wishing you a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

*“May you have the gladness of Christmas which is hope;  
The spirit of Christmas which is peace;  
The heart of Christmas which is love.”*

# Walking for Softies

Our season started in September with a trip to the spectacular and beautiful Montalto Estate at Spa near Ballynahinch. After visiting the witch's house we wandered our way round the lake and surrounding paths. The reflections in the water were amazing. Afterwards we retreated to the impressive estate cafe, where we sampled their assortment of delicious scones and piping hot coffee and tea, and of course the craic.

In October we visited The Commons in Donaghadee. It was a blustery day, but that didn't stop a large turn out. This time we were delighted to be joined by Elliot and Nomi and of course Wesley! We were very glad our walk had been in the morning, as that afternoon there was such a heavy downpour with localised flooding. Pier 36 gave us the use of the Copeland Suite and provided plates of scones and several refills of coffee and tea. Nothing was too much trouble for them. As ever the chat and the laughter was a large part of the morning.

If you would like to join us for any of our walks listed below, or even just come for the coffee and chat, do please speak to Ian or Zandra. We meet on the last Saturday of each month at 10:00 in the car park of the venue for that day.





Our planned walks for the remainder of the season will be;

Saturday 2nd December. Billy Neill's Country Park between Comber and Dundonald

Saturday 27th January. Coastal pat from Carnalea to Pickie. We will take the train to Carnalea and walk back to Bangor via the Path.

Saturday 24th February. Lagan Towpath near Shaw's Bridge

Saturday 3rd March. Antrim Castle Gardens

Saturday 27th April. Rowallane Gardens, Saintfield

Saturday 25th May. Quoile River Walk at Downpatrick, followed by lunch at Finnebrogue Woods.

***(NB. Should the weather prove too inclement at any of these locations, we will instead use Linear Park near Ballycrochan.)***



# *Sale and Coffee Morning*

The church halls were buzzing with chatter and laughter on 27 November when we held our sale and coffee morning . The unused gift stall was once again very popular and was overflowing with everything from baby socks to a karcher window washer. As usual our bakers did us proud with an array of lovely breads , cakes , pastries and of course the much sought after and beautifully packaged Christmas puddings. All sorts of jams , marmalades and chutneys , some with a Christmas twist , were available and snapped up . The tombola , with William and Elliot selling the tickets , had a range of prizes and was also a great success.

Having bought lots of goodies on the stalls visitors were treated to a cup of coffee and one of Pauline's famous scones . After all her hard work it was fitting that she won the lovely Christmas cake baked and donated by Ella Millikan , having correctly guessed its weight.

All in all it was a great community event which raised £1173 for church funds . A big thank you to everyone who provided goods for sale or prizes , helped on the day and who visited the sale. Your support is very much appreciated. We couldn't do it without you .







# YOUTH PIZZA NIGHTS

**Take a fresh slice from our new pizza home group for young people age 13-18!**

7:30-9pm Sundays fortnightly in local home  
3rd Dec / 14th + 28th Jan / 12th + 25th Feb

Includes pizza, games & more  
(quizzes / sweets / sparklers!)

Message Elliot for address if they'd like to come!  
[elliotgroomsport@gmail.com](mailto:elliotgroomsport@gmail.com)

**Spread the sauce,  
spread the dough,  
spread the word!**



# *Confidential Bereavement Support Group*

The confidential Bereavement Support Group will run on the second Thursday of every month at 2 pm, in the Maxwell Hall.

We are so fortunate to have Muriel Cairns, one of our own parishioners, leading the group. Muriel is a retired Social Worker, working with the elderly and vulnerable adults. She has experience volunteering with Childline and Relate and is currently working as a volunteer in Belfast Trust Bereavement Team. Muriel is keen to stress that gatherings are completely confidential, and anything discussed will not leave the four walls of the Maxwell Hall.

She also wishes you to know that the group welcomes **all ages** and **all those who have lost someone important to them**.

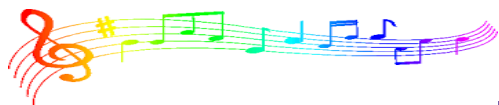
You can either just turn up or you can give Muriel a call on 07976 239 896 if you would like further details.

## *Sing for Fun!*

This is a new enterprise which Pauline Harrison and Mary Cargill have decided to try out. It is intended to bring together dementia sufferers and their carers, and anyone else interested in singing for fun for one hour each month to sing songs and enjoy a bit of a change from “normal” everyday life. Join us on Tuesdays at 2 pm in the Tyney Hall. We hope that you will support our venture so that it may become a regular event. If you want any further details, give either of us a call.

Mary- 028 9147 4098 or

Pauline- 07745 191808





Groomsport Parish Church

Christmas  
Afternoon Tea



**days of Christmas Ballot Draw**

All Prizes worth at least £30

5 tickets for £3 | 10 tickets for £5

**Saturday 16th December @ 2:30 pm**  
Donation £12

Tickets available from Maureen - 07843 679714,  
Church Wardens or the office.



# Clubs and Activities in the Church Hall

## Monday

Every week	<b>Groomsport Art Club</b>	<b>1.30 pm</b>	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Second and Fourth Monday	<b>Chattering Needles</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b> (Starting 9th Oct)	Contact Jenny 07748 580541
Third Monday in the month	<b>Mothers' Union</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b> (starting 18th Sept)	Contact Faith 07802 494260
First Monday in the month	<b>Select Vestry meeting</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b>	Contact Heather 07834 771075

## Tuesday

First Tuesday in the month	<b>The Tuesday Club</b>	<b>2 pm</b>	Contact Mary 07359 373770
Second Tuesday in the month	<b>Sing for Fun</b>	<b>2 pm</b> (further details in magazine)	Contact Pauline 07745 191808 or Mary 07359 373770
Every Tuesday	<b>Prayer for Revival</b>	<b>6 pm</b>	Contact Elliot 07957 724965

## Wednesday

Every week	<b>Mojos Club</b>	<b>9.30 am</b>	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Every week	<b>Scrabble Club</b>	<b>2 pm</b>	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Every week	<b>Crafty Stitchers</b>	<b>2 pm</b>	Contact Susan 07867 782395
Every week	<b>Silver Spurs Line Dancing Club</b>	<b>8 pm</b>	Contact Gillian 07968 225619

## Thursday

<i>First and Third Thursday in the month</i>	<b>Coffee, Scones and Soup</b>	<b>11 am</b>	Contact Pauline 07745 191808
<i>Second Thursday in the month</i>	<b>New Confidential Bereavement Group</b>	<b>2 pm</b>	Contact Muriel 07976 239896
<i>Every week</i>	<b>Jubilate practice in Church</b>	<b>2 pm</b>	Contact Maurice 07752 569999
<i>Every week</i>	<b>Thai Chi</b>	<b>2 pm</b>	Contact Janet 07703 360385
<i>Second and Fourth Thursday</i>	<b>Bangor Art Club</b>	<b>7 pm</b>	Gordon 07583 027517
<i>First Thursday in the month</i>	<b>Groomsport Masonic Lodge</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b>	Contact Jonathan 07876 687517
<i>Every week</i>	<b>Chess Club</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b>	Brendan 07871 037506

## Friday

<i>Every Week</i>	<b>Rising Stars Theatre Youth Group</b>	<b>3 pm</b>	Contact Poppy 07711 062137
-------------------	---	-------------	-------------------------------

## Saturday

<i>Last Saturday in the month</i>	<b>Walking for Softies</b>	<b>10 am</b>	Contact Ian 07968401387 for details of location
-----------------------------------	----------------------------	--------------	--

## Sunday

<i>Every Sunday</i>	<b>Sunday Fun Club</b>	<b>9.30 am</b>	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
---------------------	------------------------	----------------	--------------------------------





# Sunday Fun Club

A new group for primary school children & parents/carers/grandparents  
(+ preschool siblings) to have fun exploring following Jesus together!

9:30-10:30am every Sunday, Church Halls  
(except 24 & 31 Dec + 7 Jan)





## *Just for now!*

Just for now, a quick note to ask any parents or grandparents not to get rid of any good condition toys/puzzles for pre school age children. Hold on to them until the New Year when we will explain more about how the Church may be able to make use of them. If you have any queries, ask Ashley or Elliot.



## *Crafty Stitchers*

Crafty Stitchers are looking for new members. They meet on Wednesday afternoon 2 to 4 pm in the Maxwell Hall. All stitchers are welcome, whether they knit, crochet, sew or embroider.

Please contact Susan on  
07867782395.



## *Tuesday Club*



**The Tuesday Club Groomsport Presents**

**Alan Cory and Festival Brass**

**on Friday 26th January 2024 at 7:30 pm**

**In the Presbyterian Church, Main Street, Groomsport**

**Proceeds to Guide Dogs**

**Tickets £10. Available from 028 9147 4098.**

# *A Wonder of the World?* By Amanda McWhinney

In October, I set off to find some winter sun, I found the sunshine in Bodrum and lots of it.

Bodrum, Turkey, is home to the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus and a recently unearthed Amphitheatre.

Shrouded in history and mystery, these ancient marvels promised to transport me back in time.

The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus: A disappointing encounter, perhaps. As I arrived at the site of the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, I had hoped to feel a sense of awe. This ancient burial monument, constructed in the 4th century BCE, was once considered one of the World's Seven Wonders. However, upon closer inspection,

I realised that time had not been kind to this once-architectural masterpiece.

The Mausoleum, dedicated to the Persian satrap Mausolus, was once an imposing structure adorned with intricately carved sculptures and vast colonnades. However, centuries of earthquakes, plundering, and neglect had reduced it to a mere shadow of its former glory. The once-magnificent edifice was now a jumble of broken stones and weathered ruins intertwined with weeds and old shrubbery. Though disappointed by its dilapidated state, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus still held an undeniable charm, serving as a testament to the passage of time and the impermanence of human achievements. The Amphitheatre: an unexpected extra. Having explored the remnants of the



Mausoleum, my journey continued to the Amphitheatre. Unlike the Mausoleum, the existence of this ancient structure was unknown until the 1970s, when it was accidentally discovered during construction work. Walking through the narrow streets, I realised that locating the Amphitheatre was no easy feat.

The absence of clear signage and the maze-like nature of the streets added an element of adventure. Finally, after much perseverance, I stumbled upon the Amphitheatre, tucked away in an unassuming corner of the city. Some of the streets looked unwelcoming, littered, uphill, and not what you would expect while visiting one of the Wonders of the Ancient World.

The Amphitheatre, though smaller in scale than many I have seen, exuded an undeniable charm. It was a well-preserved

testament to the Roman influence in ancient Anatolia.

And while the Mausoleum was underwhelming in its dilapidated state, the Amphitheatre was captivating as a well-preserved structure. Ultimately, my travels to these historical sites reinforced the significance of preserving our cultural heritage and appreciating the stories they hold.

Despite their varying conditions, the Mausoleum and the Amphitheatre provided glimpses into the past, reminding me of the enduring legacy of ancient civilisations.

As I left Halicarnassus, I carried with me a renewed appreciation for the mysteries and marvels that exist in the world around us.





RISING STARS

Theatre Youth Group

# Rising Stars Theatre Youth Group

WHERE EVERYONE GETS THE CHANCE TO SHINE!

JOIN THE FUN AT  
GROOMSPORT PARISH HALL

JUST

£6

Per session

*Every Friday!*

For more information:



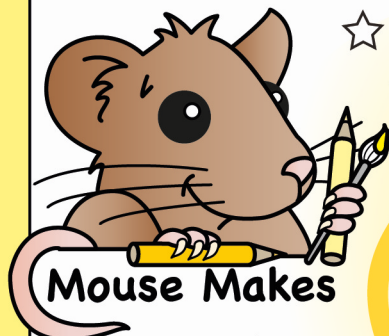
Rising Stars Theatre Youth Group

[risingstarsni@outlook.com](mailto:risingstarsni@outlook.com)

07711062137







**Mouse Makes**



### GOD'S PROMISE

*Isaiah 9:6-7*

CHILD • BORN • SON  
GIVEN • WONDERFUL  
COUNCELLOR  
MIGHTY • GOD  
EVERLASTING  
FATHER • PRINCE  
PEACE • LORD



### AN ANGEL MESSENGER

*Luke 1:26-38*

ANGEL • GABRIEL  
JOSEPH • MARY  
FAVOUR • SON  
JESUS • GREAT  
THRONE • REIGN  
FOREVER • HOLY  
SERVANT • WORD

**ADVENT**  
comes from  
the Latin  
'AD VENTO'  
which means  
**ARRIVAL**

In Advent we  
celebrate Jesus' birth  
and look forward to  
the time when Jesus  
will come again.



### A LONG JOURNEY

*Luke 2:1-20*

BETHLEHEM  
REGISTER • BIRTH  
MANGER • INN  
SHEPHERDS • FLOCK  
ANGELS • JOY  
GOOD NEWS • PRAISE  
SAVIOUR • CHRIST



### THE BEST GIFT OF ALL

*John 3:16*

GOD • SO • LOVED  
WORLD • HE • GAVE  
ONLY • SON  
WHOEVER • BELIEVES  
ETERNAL • LIFE

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



# Our Christmas Gatherings 2023

*Everyone, all ages & backgrounds, is warmly invited to come join us sometime this Christmas.  
Why not bring a friend along?*

## OUR TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS SERVICES:

**Sun 17 Dec - 6pm**  
Lessons & Carols  
by Candlelight

**Sun 24 Dec - 11:30 pm**  
First Communion of Christmas  
by Candlelight

**25 Dec - 8:30 am**  
Traditional Christmas  
Holy Communion

## GATHERINGS ESPECIALLY FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY:

**Sun 17 Dec - 9:30am** (*Church Halls*)  
Sunday Fun Club - Christmas Party!  
(*Especially for children & parents/carers.!*)

**Sun 24 Dec - 5pm**  
Crib Service  
Assembling our Nativity set together

**25 Dec - 10:30am**  
Christmas Celebration  
for all ages together!

