

FEB - MAR 24

GROOMSPORT PARISH CHURCH

CONTACT

www.groomsportparishchurch.org



Lighting the Beacons

It was Ireland, around AD 433. The Church of Christ, founded 400 years earlier at Pentecost in AD 33, was still one- there was no split into Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant- and would be so for another half a millennium (until the first great schism in AD 1054). It was also over 1000 years before the present United Kingdom would formally begin to exist as a nation.

Christianity had only just begun to dawn on the island- with the work of a handful of men and women who devoted everything to Christ, beginning to kindle the flame amongst the land where the name of Jesus was not even known.

One of these figures, passionate for the Gospel, is said to have lit a fire in defiance of the local pagan king. These kings and priests had previously lit a fire of their own, in honour of their sun god Bel, and commanded that no other fires be lit. Yet this man, passionate for the Gospel, lit another blazing fire celebrating the light of Jesus Christ, a paschal fire proclaiming His resurrection, in direct confrontation of their command.

This man's name was Patrick.

It is said in one account that the pagan priests of the day were so deeply troubled by the sight of this rival fire, and advised the King that it must be immediately suppressed, lest the light of Jesus "will never be extinguished in Ireland. Moreover, it will outshine all the fires we light."

To this day, the light of the Gospel of Jesus has never been extinguished.

This pentecostal flame is continued symbolically in every candle we prayerfully light, in every song we sing from the soul, in every real heart-cry to God rising from our spirit. It burns in our hearts, the centre of our being, both every time we gather together, and every time we go and live our lives day to day as lights of Christ in the world, as living fires of His gloriously loving presence.

From tiny beginnings at the first Christmas, the light of Christ is burning brightly across our world today. In some nations, such as China, Nepal, Yemen, UAE and Saudi Arabia, the number following Jesus is growing so rapidly that it is on track to double in the next 10 years (according to a Gordon-Conwell study). In our nation, we have also had huge past movements of the Spirit of Christ, from St. Patrick's day, to the 1859 Ulster revival - only a few years after the Groomsport church was first built. Yet at present, in comparison to other nations of the world, faith in Jesus is in a dry and stagnant season in our own nation.

We need an outpouring of the new life of Christ in this spiritual desert of our nation! We long for the flame of the Gospel of Christ to burn bright again here, as it is doing in many other parts of the world right now, in 2024. He is the One who brings life from death!

Every prayer we pray from the depths of

who we are, every verse of Scripture we take to heart, every time we show the love of Christ to someone suffering, every time we share even the tiniest little hint of our faith with someone new, we kindle these sparks.

As we plough our way into this new year, we approach St Patrick's day- when this year churches across our Diocese will be lighting beacons in Downpatrick and then our own beacon outside our own church building in the evening- and then Easter, proclaiming His resurrection!

May we kindle the beautiful flame of the Gospel of resurrection, of new life from the dead, to burn in our hearts like never before, that with our brothers and sisters in Him from every denomination, whether Protestant or Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, whatever label we take, we may together add our own heart-fuel to this Gospel beacon of Christ's love in our nation that truly will never be put out!

Elliott Swatbridge



Contact Us

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NIC103258

Sunday 9:30 am - Sunday Fun

**Sunday 7.30 pm (Fortnightly) -
Youth Pizza and Games Night**

**Wednesday 11 am - Prayer for Revival (in
Church)**

Tuesday 7 pm - Compline

Thursday 11 am - Holy Communion

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

The Parish Halls
Main Street
Groomsport
Co Down
BT19 6JR

028 91271311
gpcoffice@btinternet.com

February and March 2024

The Second Sunday before Lent Candlemas

4th February

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. Hosted by Eleanor and Tony Anderson, Ella Milliken and Marian Cinnamond.

The Sunday before Lent

11th February

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

The First Sunday in Lent

18th February

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

The Second Sunday in Lent

25th February

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

The Third Sunday in Lent

3rd March

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. Hosted by The Mother's Union

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

10th March

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

The Fifth Sunday in Lent Saint Patrick's Day

17th March

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word
6:00 pm St Patrick's Beacon
Lighting (outside Church)

The Sixth Sunday in Lent Palm Sunday

24th March

8:30 am Holy Communion
11 am United Service at
Presbyterian Church
6:00 pm Compline with Palms

Easter Day The First Sunday of Easter

31st March

6:30 am Easter Sunrise Service
on the beach
8:30 am Traditional Easter
Communion (without
music)
10:30 am Communion
(with Easter hymns!)
Meet outside Church
for an Easter Egg Hunt
around the Village
3:00 pm Everyone Welcome!

No evening services

SAVE THE DATE!

Special Services

Sunday 4th Feb - Candlemas

10:30am - Presentation of Christ - Candle Service (Candlemas)

Wednesday 14th February - Ash Wednesday

11am - Service of returning to God together

Friday 1st March - World Day of Prayer

7pm - Special ecumenical service (prepared by Christian women of Palestine)

Saturday 16th March

Lighting the Beacons of the Gospel

At Down Cathedral at 11:45am with Bishop Jill Duff

One not to miss as we come together with people across the Diocese to seek after the new light of Christ in our nation!

Sunday 17th March - St Patrick's Day

6:00pm - St Patrick's Beacon Lighting (Meet outside church)

This is one not to miss as we join with churches across the Diocese in lighting beacons of the Gospel across our land - come join in the light!



Groomsport Easter 2024 Dates

Palm Sunday 24th March

8:30 am Holy Communion
11 am United Service at
Presbyterian Church
6:00 pm Compline with Palms

Monday 25th March

7 am - 7 pm Easter Prayer Room
7:30 pm Word, Prayer, Hymns
with Mother's Union
(with music in Church)

Tuesday 26th March

7 am - 7 pm Easter Prayer Room
7:30 pm Compline with Scripture
Reflection (without music,
in Church)

Wednesday 27th March

7 am - 7 pm Easter Prayer Room
7:30 pm Bethany Service - Prayerful
reflection on Mary's
anointing of Jesus (in
prayer room)

Maundy Thursday 28th March

No 11 am Communion
7:30 pm Jesus' last supper - Holy
Communion. Includes foot
washing (optional) as in
John 13.

Good Friday 29th March

1:30 - 3 pm Vigil at the Cross of Our Lord



Holy Saturday 30th March

No Services in Church

Home Easter Vigil

You are invited to light a candle in your home around sunset (about 7 pm) and spend a few minutes in prayerful waiting for the dawn...

Easter Sunday 31st March

6:30 am Easter Sunrise Service on the beach followed by Breakfast
8:30 am Traditional Easter Communion (without music)
10:30 am Holy Communion (with Easter hymns!)
3:00 pm Meet outside Church for an Easter Egg Hunt around the Village - Everyone Welcome!

No evening services

There are no midweek services in the week following Easter



Happy Easter

Candlemas

As we approach the festival of Candlemas, what do we know about this ages old celebration? The word itself stems from the Old English, “candelmaesse”, candel + maess (feast); and also from the candles traditionally blessed and carried during the celebration.

Candlemas is a Christian festival held on the first Sunday in February. The actual date is 2 February, 40 days after Christmas. It marks the return of light after the darkest days of winter. It celebrates the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, when Simeon held Jesus in his arms and told Mary and Joseph that the child would be a light for the Gentiles (Luke 2 : 32). Candlemas also commemorates the Purification of Mary, 40 days after giving birth to the Christ Child.

Candles have long been held as a symbol of Our Lord. The beeswax signifies Christ’s purity, the wick his soul, and the flame his divinity.

Snowdrops are also known as Candlemas Bells, because they bloom early in the year before Candlemas. Many see the flower as a symbol of Christ as the hope for our world.

Candles lit during Candlemas also represent Christ as the “light of the world”.

Many rhymes are associated with Candlemas. The following is perhaps the best

***“If Candlemas Day be fair and bright,
winter will have another fight.
If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain,
winter won’t come again”***



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

On 15th January, the Mothers' Union had its AGM in the Canon Tyney Hall. Elliot chaired the meeting.

The photo shows the outgoing Branch Leader Rev Faith Cully and the committee.

From left to right: Dorothy McKnight, Elaine Lester, Sally McKee, Freda Scott and Rev Faith Cully.

Each was presented with a bunch of tulips by Elliot. Faith was also given a framed photo of Donaghadee Lighthouse with a Bible verse printed on it.

Sally McKee was chosen as the new Branch Leader and the new committee is made up of the following members. Freda Scott, Rosemary Smith, Elaine Lester, Mary Cargill, Lizzie Stuart and Ann Blachford.



December & January Vestry Minutes

As will happen at the beginning of all meetings, Elliot lit the Vestry candle. After some discussion, the majority of the Select Vestry decided it was unwise on Health and Safety grounds to have a glass display cabinet in either the Church or the Halls. Instead, the Vestry agreed that it would be a good idea to share the Archives by holding an annual Exhibition in the Halls. Barry reminded Vestry members that there was a box in the office for any documents.

OMA were thrilled to receive £1,400 from the Harvest Appeal. The decision on donations to charities was put back to January when it was decided that the following would each receive £400 – Autism NI, PTSD, Water Aid and NI Cancer. It was agreed that next year we might consider some very small local charities. Donations to the Projects Fund are steadily coming in, but it was agreed that in the New Year Elliot will make mention of this, as this Fund had been set up prior to his arrival. The Vestry was unanimous in its decisions about salaries. Elliot wanted his thanks to Florence recorded for all the work she does with the Church Finances.

Elliot is really encouraged by attendance at Sunday Fun Club – in fact they may soon have to move out of the Avril Morley room for more space. He is also delighted to have begun fortnightly Sunday Pizza nights for a number of teenagers in his home.

He noted that “word of mouth” had proved more advantageous than social media and asked everyone to keep spreading the word. He informed the Vestry that our grant application for £2,000 had been successful and that hopefully a Mum and Toddler group will begin on Friday mornings sometime in the New Year.

Following detailed investigation, the Select Vestry has opted to move from Power NI to Go Power from the month of January.

Kate Murray has put in a lot of effort to ensure our Safeguarding Trust audit was completed successfully.

Heather wrote to Shaun William to thank him for his contribution to the Remembrance Service.

Maureen reported on a very successful Morning Coffee, Afternoon Tea and 12 Days of Christmas ballot and Kildare Shopping Trip.

When Ashley is not available in the office, the answer machine will be switched on, meaning calls will go directly through to Elliot.

Elliot asked for continued prayer for fruitful connections to each other and to God.

Vestry agreed to close the Rectory Account, which is no longer required, and

transfer the remaining money to the Projects Fund.

There has been much discussion about the step into the pews at the back of the Church. Professional advice has been sought and Gordon Boyd has arranged for signage, lighting, and handrails to deal with the difficulty. Tony is to spray the weeds at the back of the Church. Following a paper and presentation by Gordon, the new Hall Manager, it was unanimously agreed that a free 90 day computer based management system (Hall master) should be trialled, to see if it meets our needs for hall bookings, heating time clocks etc. Maureen was reassured to learn that it could also be used to book events.

Maureen informed the Vestry about the Raving Micks concert on 2 February, the Men's Breakfast on 24 February and the Easter Egg Hunt. It is hoped moving forward that the three Groomspoor Churches and Discover Groomspoor will coordinate events and Maureen will represent us in this group.

There was a request for Carol Service readings not to be laminated in future. Also, it was agreed that parking in the Churchyard should be reserved for those with severe mobility issues.

Kate reminded Vestry that at the beginning of events in the hall, those attending should be reminded about housekeeping rules. It was also agreed

that, for GDPR reasons, photographs must not be taken without people's prior permission.

Elliot informed the Vestry that the Prayer for Revival group has moved to Wednesday at 11.00am in the Church, as this seemed to be a more suitable time.

The Annual Easter Vestry will be on the latest possible date according to Diocesan regulations.



Public Notice Vestry Register

The Register of Vestry Members for Groomsport Parish will be open for review and available for inspection after the March Vestry Meeting. This is in accordance with Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland and Regulation 7 of the Down and Dromore Diocesan Regulations.

The Select Vestry will meet to conduct the formal review at 7.30pm on Monday 4 March 2024.

To add your name to the Register, if you are not already on it, forms of Declaration for both Resident and Accustomed (those not living inside the Parish boundary) members of the congregation, must be submitted before the opening of that meeting. Forms are available from the Wardens, the Office or myself.

Elliot Swatbridge
January 2024

Public Notice Easter Vestry - Sunday 14 April

The Annual Easter Vestry meeting of the Parish of Groomsport shall take place following Morning Prayer on Sunday 14 April in the Canon Tyney Hall in accordance with Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland.

Nomination forms for office have been included with all Contact magazines and are available from the Wardens or the Office. Nominations must be received by the Vestry Secretary by Thursday 23 March at the latest.

Only registered Vestry Members may vote. Please bring "Any Other Notified Business" to the attention of the Vestry Secretary on or before the Sunday prior to the meeting – Sunday 7 April.

This is an important annual occasion in the life of the Church family. Please pray for its business and feel welcomed and encouraged to attend.

Elliot Swatbridge
January 2024

From the Registers

Holy Matrimony

30th December 2023

Kerri Handley and Philip Cochrane. Kerri is the Granddaughter of Joan Handley

Holy Rest

29th January 2024

Ken Hawtin, husband of Lynn Hawtin

8th January 2024

Jack Niblock, husband of the late Mary Niblock.

13th December 2023

Vi Drew, wife of the late Donald Drew.

Toddler Group



We hope to start our new Toddler Group on Friday mornings in late February/ early March. We would love to get a few volunteers to help with set up etc.

If this is something you think you could help with on a rota basis, please give your name and contact details to Elliot, the Church Wardens or Ashley. Your help would be greatly appreciated.



Praying for the year Ahead - Mark G. Johnston

Another year has begun and already we are getting a feel for the challenges it is likely to bring. News of war and conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East continues to dominate the headlines. The intensification of strike action comes with a sense of déjà vu for people of a certain age who remember the 1970's; all of which casts a cloud over our hopes for what may or may not lie ahead. But how should we react to the unknowns of the coming year if we are Christians, and how should we pray in response?

Jesus himself gives us the answer. When his disciples asked him, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Lk 11.1), his answer was to teach them the Lord's Prayer. He gave them these words not just as an actual prayer for them to pray on their own or with fellow-believers; but, also, as a pattern for how to pray. It is a prayer that models the shape, structure and progression of all our prayers and enables us to see the key elements we need to pray for.

There is, however, one request, recorded in Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer, that colours all the others. It is, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done as it is in heaven...' (Mt 6.10). But what do we mean when we pray, 'Your kingdom come...'?

The Bible has much to say about God's kingdom and what it means to be part of it. As we appreciate why it matters, we realise this petition touches every aspect of life. When we pray these words, we

acknowledge that Jesus, God's Son, is King of kings and Lord of lords. So too we realise that his rule is far more than that of a sovereign calling for the respect and loyalty of his subjects. Rather, it is his way of bringing redemption and restoration to our ruined world and our troubled lives.

When Jesus was born, he was hailed as the 'King of the Jews' by the wise men from the East who came to greet him (Matt 2.1-2) and when he began his public ministry, he announced it by saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Mt 4.17). This has far-reaching implications. It points ultimately to the day when Jesus returns in all his kingly splendour and will usher in a 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells' (2Peter 3.13). That is, a renovated world and universe which will be the everlasting home for all who trust him as their Lord and Saviour.

Why does this matter and how does it help us see where our priorities for prayer need to be placed? It matters because it shows that when we pray for the most important thing in life, all the smaller issues fall into place around it.

Too often our prayers sound like shopping lists that we bring to God for issues we cannot resolve by ourselves. We pray for healing from our ailments, or 'daily bread' when we are struggling to make ends meet; but that mentality in prayer gives the impression that God is only there for the emergencies of life.

(And when we realise that ‘daily bread’ is something Jesus tells us to pray for, we realise that even the simplest things are given by God.)

It is a blessing to live in a part of the world where we are well provided for in terms of daily necessities of life, healthcare and education for our children and grandchildren.

But these good things can all too often generate a false sense of security and it is only when we are hit by the challenges of life – unemployment, illness, and the prospect of death – that we begin to realise there must be more to life than this.

Saint Augustine famously put his finger on the heart of the human problem when he said in his Confessions, ‘You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.’ When a person discovers this gift of rest through Christ, they are brought into a whole new life in which God promises to strengthen and keep us by his Holy Spirit and one day take us to the eternal home he has promised in heaven.

Jesus said, ‘I have come that they might have life and have it to the full’ (John 10.10). To know him as our Lord and Saviour is to have a whole new life in which we are no longer held hostage to our sin and failure; but are set free to live life to the full. More than this, death – which the Bible calls ‘the last enemy’ – will no longer haunt us, because Jesus came to ‘abolish death and bring life and

immortality to light through the gospel (2Timothy 1.10).

A well-known Christian organisation that works with students all over the world has the following mission statement: ‘Changing the world one person at a time.’ It well captures what it means to pray ‘Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’

It is said that that The Times once sent out an inquiry to famous authors, asking the question, “What’s wrong with the world today?” and G.K. Chesterton – a well-known Christian author of that time – responded simply,

Dear Sir,
I am.

Yours, G.K. Chesterton.

When we pray, ‘Your kingdom come’ we are praying that those who are living in the realm of spiritual darkness would be brought into a whole new life in the Kingdom of Light where Jesus is both our Saviour and King. When that one all-important need is met, the others will fall into place through God’s love and mercy.

Rev. Mark Johnston

Minister of the Evangelical Presbyterian



Afternoon Tea and Luxury Draw

What a great festive atmosphere in the church halls on 16 December for our second Afternoon Tea and Luxury Draw. The hall and the tables were beautifully decorated thanks to Kate and Susan. As usual our dedicated helpers pulled out all the stops for a lovely tea of sandwiches made by a number of our ladies, scones with jam and cream and mince pies made by Pauline, and shortbread made by Kate and Margaret. The delicious lemon posset back by popular demand, made by Heather, gave us a lovely finish to the meal.

The Twelve Days of Christmas Luxury Ballot Draw provided great excitement as the names of the winners of some great prizes were called out by Elliot. Our thanks to Heather for all her hard work organising the draw.

The Event ended on a high note with Jubilate singing a number of pieces and finally leading us all in singing a selection of Christmas Carols. It is fair to say that we all left the event feeling a bit more festive and looking forward to Christmas.

Our thanks to everyone who helped out in making the event so successful and to all who attended for supporting us yet again.





Photos taken by Barry Greenaway on behalf of the Groomsport Parish Archives



12 days of Christmas Ballot Draw *Winners*

Richard Lucas signed print of Castlerock - **Andrew Nicholson**

Set of Bedeck towels - **Zandra Sloan**

Non-stick table grill - **David McKnight**

Ladies' Bench fleece - **Judith Harris**

Men's Crew rugby shirt - **Rachel Hayes**

Jaeger handbag and toning scarf - **Christine Dellar**

Ladies' Joules pyjamas - **Pearl Brown**

Newbridge silver candlestick - **Lorraine Cardwell**

24 piece multi colour cutlery set - **Rosemary Smith**

Men's Joules polo shirt - **Pam Harpur**

Luxury throw - **Trevor Craythorne**

Set of Christmas mugs - **Helen Parkinson**



A Righteous and Devout Man Carol Walters



My name is Simeon. I come to the temple very regularly. I have done so for as long as I can remember. I pray constantly for the consolation of Israel. One day as I prayed it was revealed to me that before I died I would see the Messiah. Many of us long for the Messiah but we all have different ideas as to how he might be revealed. For many it means freedom from the oppression of Rome, but I could not help thinking it would mean far more than that. I did not know at all clearly however what to expect, I simply prayed and tried to keep myself open to all possibilities.

One day, as I prayed it came upon me that I should go immediately to the temple. I went and I prayed and waited, watching as people came in. Then a young, poor couple came in with their infant. It is customary, forty days after the birth of a baby to come with an offering to the temple. I knew they were poor as the usual offering would be a lamb but they just had a pair of doves. Suddenly I knew... this child was the Messiah. I approached the couple and held out my arms. The father looked concerned but I saw something in the mother's eyes which told me that she had a clear idea that her baby was special.

As I held this baby in my arms I felt my longing to be at last answered and I praised God, I knew this child was going to be a light to lighten all our worlds, not just that of the Jewish nation but for the Gentiles as well. So much came upon me at that moment that I had to share it with the parents. I blessed them and I looked at the mother who was clearly amazed, like her husband, at what I was saying. I told them what their child was going to achieve, but I had to tell them the whole truth as it was revealed to me. It was going to be hurtful to this trusting young woman who had such a special child.



It was a wonderful, remarkable moment and I knew, as I am an old man, that I could die in peace, God had revealed this to me and kept His promise, as indeed, He always does. The story of Simeon is briefly referred to in Luke's gospel, chapter two, verse twenty-five to thirty-five.

Could Prayer be our daily bread?

Have there been many days in your life so far where you have not eaten or drunk anything? Even on the busiest and most hectic of days, in the heaviest of schedules, the need for physical nourishment tends to win the day.

In our Lord's prayer we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." And by including this very everyday petition, our Lord shows us how communicating with Him, being with Him, speaking with and listening to Him, is something we are invited to feed on every single day of our lives. In fact we are made this way!

This is why I would love our challenge for 2024 to be really simple - can we speak to God, one-to-one, every day? I don't mean something we do in the church building here - I mean something that's just God and ourselves. It doesn't matter how short or how long - even a few words, in 1 minute or less, is a good start - the very act of making it every single day will be used by Him to begin to transform us. It doesn't matter what words we use, or what technique - God made us all with vastly different personalities, in beautiful diversity - as long as we are connecting with Him, even really briefly, from the heart. No need for guilt, or pressure - this is meant to be something light, and restful, and refreshing.

One more thing: it is not selfish to pray for yourself! Instead it is a sign of humility - for prayer says, "God, I can't do this alone!" It is arrogant not to pray for

ourselves because it implies that we never feel we need help because we're all OK on our own... Jesus leads us in the Lord's prayer to pray both for ourselves, and for others, each day - you can never do too much of either!

And these tiny little sparks of a few minutes of prayer will, I can testify from my own experience, kindle that flame of faith in and of love for Jesus that no dark circumstance will be able to suffocate.

In case you need some ideas, here are some practical ways to begin:

- Listen to some of the inspiring short reflections on Scripture in the Lectio 365 app for your phone
- Borrow a Book of Common Prayer from church and use a few words from Compline to guide your prayer one evening.
- Flick to the book of Psalms and try reading just 5 verses, and talk to God about whatever it brings to mind.
- Try praying the Lord's prayer through really slowly in a really relaxed space, perhaps while listening to some of your favourite music... or listen to a recording of some hymns or songs that really inspire your faith.
- Alternatively - this is how I first began to pray - go for a 'prayer walk' and talk to God about everything and anything you feel, just as you would chat away to a

friend walking beside you... because He is even closer than a friend could ever be!

●...or try anything else that works for you! I would recommend the book 'How to Pray' by Pete Greig for some great practical tips here! (Ask me and I can get you a copy for free!)

It's so simple and needs no fancy words, and definitely no theological qualifications (these can often be more of a hindrance if anything!) It is the language of the smallest child,

who Jesus says are one of the ultimate examples of how we should be with God - like a tiny 4-year old, speaking to a mum or daddy who they love and trust with everything. This sort of intimate nearness might feel difficult at first - but Jesus is so unspeakably gentle and will invite us into it, if we let Him.

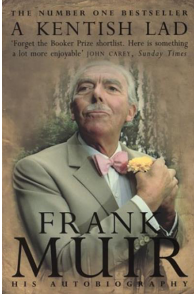
Please come and chat to me about how you are finding talking to God. I am no expert (Jesus is the only real expert!) but it is one of my favourite things to talk about ever!

Elliot Swatbridge



I hope that you have all had a lovely Christmas, it probably seems a long time away now, and Easter being early, by the time you read this that will be the next festival on all our minds. I have a lovely mix of books to share with you below and hope you find something to divert, interest or entertain you here.

A Kentish Lad. Frank Muir his Autobiography



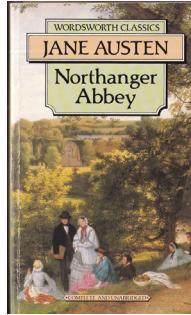
A simply delightful book. I confess to not really enjoying biographies, even of people who really interest me but this is a striking exception. I was fascinated throughout.

Perhaps because so

much of what he talks about was familiar to me. Long before he became known as a wit, raconteur and observer of human fallibility, his career in the Air Force saw him based very close to where I used to live. Prior to that I have scant knowledge of Kent but his description of his childhood is beautifully depicted and wittily told, as one might expect. Later his memories of various well known entertainers of the past, Jimmy Edwards, Arthur Askey, Peter Sellers, Ronnie Barker, Michael Bentine, Harry Secombe, Richard Briers - the list could go on - are all hugely entertaining. He also tells stories from many of the old radio and later television programmes which had me laughing out loud repeatedly. The entire book is well provided with photographs from his infancy in the 1920s to the late 1970s.

There are some truly witty stories in this book and I defy anyone over fifty not to find this a super book.

Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen

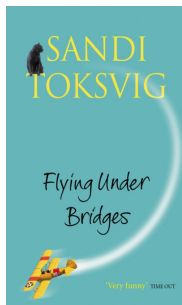


I first read this many years ago but had forgotten much of it. It is one of her earliest works and already reveals her sense of fun. It belongs to that genre generally described as "Gothic".

This involves a dark setting, romance, supernatural forces and female victims. Young women of Jane's era were fascinated by these tales, in the way that some children enjoy being scared in stories. In Northanger Abbey Jane Austen is poking gentle fun at the genre; she repeatedly builds up the tension only to have it end in anticlimax. Our heroine Catherine Morland is taken to fashionable Bath by her neighbours in order for her to be introduced to society. Of course she falls in love, but finds her beloved's father to be an intimidating man who seems to be alarmingly keen on her developing a relationship with his son. She is invited to their home, Northanger Abbey which is suitably enormous and gloomy and when she discovers that the mother died some years ago in mysterious circumstances and that all portraits of her have disappeared, in true gothic style she has to investigate previously unseen parts of the

enormous house. The observation of the hypocrisies of the time, particularly within female relationships are brilliant and witty and the whole is a most enjoyable read and, one of her shorter novels at 274 pages.

Flying Under Bridges by Sandi Toksvig



This will not be to everyone's taste I will have to admit. I am a great fan of Sandi Toksvig, her encyclopaedic knowledge, ability as a raconteur are amazing but she does have a few bees under her bonnet and several of

them are dealt blows in this story. Firstly the attitude to members of the gay community of some members of society, secondly the seeming hypocrisy of certain ministers of very evangelical tendencies and thirdly middle aged women being overlooked as of significance. All of these occur in the book. Nevertheless the plot is engaging, the characters well drawn and the story manages to be humorous and poignant simultaneously. The anti-heroine of the story is Eve Marshall, married to Adam and living a very tedious life. Suddenly her world changes, her father dies, her mother has a stroke and her dear friend from school Inge returns to the town. She is all that Eve is not, fit, glamorous, famous and living with her lover, Kate. Eve is rejuvenated by renewing her relationship with Inge but although Inge is loved by the town, they are not at all enamoured by Kate. This is particularly true of her son-in-law to be and the charismatic minister at the

church he attends. The book is filled, as you might expect from Sandi Toksvig, with fascinating facts about random topics and despite my observations is a really good read.

The Grey Woman by Elizabeth Gaskell



This beautiful little book is presented very elegantly with a firm binding which makes it feel almost like a miniature hardback. It is in fact quite small enough to fit into a handbag or even large pocket. The short novel,

it is only seventy seven pages long, is written in the Gothic tradition. Sometimes referred to as Gothic horror, they involve a good deal of tension, fear and possibly supernatural events, certainly the past has a big effect on the events of the story as it moves along. This book is widely considered to be Elizabeth Gaskell's best work, I am not sure that I would agree, I found the gritty realism of Mary Barton more to my taste. Nevertheless in the work Elizabeth Gaskell daringly exposes domestic abuse and exploitation, cruelty and control in marriage. In fact it is very much ahead of its time in terms of the feminist approach taken, remembering that this was first published in 1881. The tension is palpable, almost throughout as Anna Scherer is forced into marriage with a wealthy man after the death of her father; left with no choice, she is obliged to marry a man with whom, having only ever met him in company, she is already

uncomfortable. Inevitably the chateau to which she is taken is full of strange corridors, endless doors, gloomy ornate furniture and aged mirrors, all of course seen by candlelight. What makes the story somewhat cumbersome in my opinion, is that it is largely delivered through the medium of letters written by Anna to her daughter.

Finally, a plea for more books please! If you are doing a spring clean, don't forget the book shelves. However please remember there are only three kinds of books that we have room for. Fiction, novels and stories, children's books and books about the Christian faith. I have no room to store or display gardening, cookery, fitness, diet, business manuals, IT guides, travel- I'm sure you get the picture. When we have our next book fair I will accept some non-fiction but until then please don't bring them.

Carol



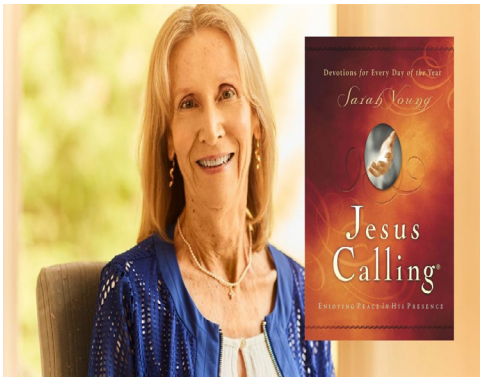
A Devotional

Let Me prepare you for the day that stretches out before you. I know exactly what this day will contain, whereas you have only vague ideas about it. You would like to see a road map, showing all the twists and turns of your journey. You'd feel more prepared if you could somehow visualize what is on the road ahead. However, there is a better way to be prepared for whatever you will encounter today. Spend quality time with Me.

I will not show you what is on the road ahead, but I will thoroughly equip you for the journey. My living Presence is your Companion each step of the way. Stay in continual communication with Me, whispering My Name whenever you need to redirect your thoughts. Thus, you can walk through this day with your focus on Me. My abiding Presence is the best road map available.

(based on Exodus 33: 14; John 15 : 4 – 7)

Taken from “Jesus Calling – Devotions for Every Day of the Year” by Sarah Young.



Salvation Army Christmas Present Appeal

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Salvation Army Christmas Present appeal in the run up to Christmas 2023. It was very humbling to see so many donations every week across November as we collected them from the church. We were contently surprised by people's generosity and kindness and it was wonderful to be able to donate toys, books and gifts for boys and girls of various ages. In total we collected over 160 presents and just about fit them in the car! This included a few last-minute additions which we managed to drop off just before the cut-off time on the final day of collection meaning that every single item was donated.

This particular appeal is something that is very close to my heart and it felt great to be able to do it alongside you all too so thank you for getting on board!

As Jubilate sang over the Christmas period "why not buy an extra present?" – so many of you did! The Salvation Army run this appeal every year and with ever increasing need I'm sure next Christmas will be no different. For anyone who didn't manage to get involved this year – there is always next year!

Thanks so much again,

Nomi Swattridge

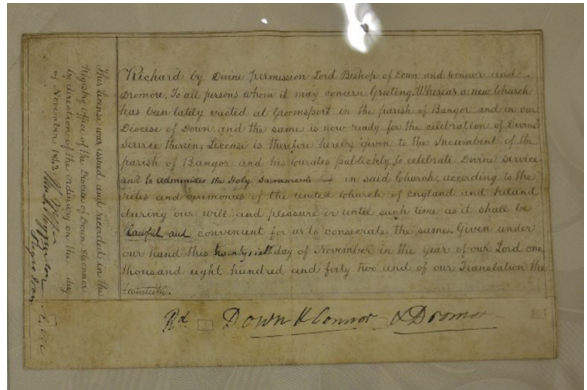


February/March 2024

The Parish Archives hold a unique collection of documents, images and artifacts on Parish and Groomsport matters. There is one, however, which is of special significance for the Parish. It is the earthly authority by which the Parish of Groomsport exists – our Licence to Conduct Divine Worship. The Parish holds one of two hand written copies signed by the then Lord Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore The Right Reverend Richard Mant and dated 26th November 1842. I have transcribed the Licence verbatim below, since the photograph here is too small to read easily.

*Richard, by Divine permission
Lord Bishop of Down and
Connor and Dromore. To
all persons whom it may
concern, Greeting. Whereas
a new Church has been lately
erected at Groomsport in
the parish of Bangor and in
our Diocese of Down and the
same is now ready for the
celebration of Divine Service
therein: License is hereby
given to the Incumbent of
the parish of Bangor and his*

*Curates publicly to celebrate Divine Service and to administer the Holy Sacraments in
said Church according to the rules and ceremonies of the United Church of England
and Ireland during our will and pleasure or until such time as it shall be lawful and
convenient for us to consecrate the same. Given under our hand this twenty sixth day
of November in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty two and of
our Translation the twentieth. The document is signed: Richard, Down and Connor
and Dromore.*



To one side is the Registrar's entry which reads: *This License was issued and recorded in the Registry Office of the Diocese of Down and Connor by the direction of the Ordinary on this day of November 1842.* It is signed William J. Higginson, Registrar.

Noteworthy is the reference to the "United Church of England and Ireland" and the fact that the Registrar does not mention Dromore with which Down & Connor united in 1842, although the Bishop does.

In 1842 the Church of Ireland was still an 'established' Church – that is part and parcel of national governance as is still the case with the Church of England.

According to Wikipedia, Richard Mant was born in Southampton, the son of a Headmaster. He was ordained in the Church of England and after several postings in England was Bishop of Killaloe & Kilfenora before coming to Down and Connor.

He died on 2nd November 1848 in Ballymoney. His death, only six years after the Licence was issued may account for the delay in the Consecration of Groomsport Church (as promised in the Licence) by Bishop Robert Knox until April 1850.

It is my belief that the date of 26th November should be celebrated annually as the foundation date for Groomsport Parish Church, perhaps using Advent Sunday as an appropriate occasion.

Remember: the Archives stand ready to receive or find out about anything that will enrich the heritage of this Parish and district. My details are on the Contact List in this magazine. Please consider donating items you may have. If you wish to keep items a

The Parish Archives catalogue is available for consultation by arrangement with the Archivist. Contact Barry at:

barry@groomsportparishchurch.org

or

phone 02891271311 to leave a message.

With my very best wishes,

Barry



Walking for Softies 2024 Programme

Our programme of walks for the rest of the season is shown below. Please note that some dates have changed.

Saturday 17 February; Lagan Towpath

Saturday 23 March; Antrim Castle Gardens

Saturday 27 April; Rowallane NT Gardens, Saintfield

Saturday 25 May; Quoile River Downpatrick, followed by lunch at Finnebrogue Estate.

If you have any questions, or would like to join us for any of these walks (you can if you prefer, miss out the walking bit and simply join us for the coffee and craic afterwards), then give us a call or speak and we'll be happy to help. Everyone is welcome!

Zandra 07968401386

Ian 07968401387

The Tuesday Club *Sponsored by The Spar - Groomsport*

A great big thank you to all those who came to our concert in aid of Guide Dogs. It was a great night and we have so many friends of the Tuesday Club that I cannot write to you all, so please take this as a personal letter from me.

We are having another open meeting on Tuesday 5th March when we shall be having the Bangor Coastguard along to talk about their work in and around our shores. As before, anyone can come along to the Canon Tyney Hall to hear them.

An open invitation to anyone who lives alone. Come along on the first Tuesday of each month, January to Decemeber and find other people who will make you feel very welcome. The meetings are advertised in the pew leaflets and also the Spectator. We have a variety of speakers and entertainers to cheer you up. Sometimes we just have tea and a chat meeting which has proved popular in the past.

If you want to know more about the Tuesday Club then ring Mary on 028 9147 4098.



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



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**.

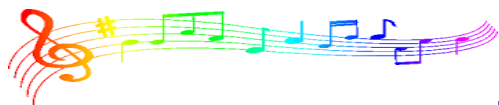
You can either just turn up or you can give Muriel a call on 07976 239 896 if you would like further details.

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 the Second Tuesday of each month at 2 pm in the Canon 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



Prayer Room

SAVE THE DATE

Monday 25 March, Tuesday 26 March, Wednesday 27 March

7:00am until 7:00pm

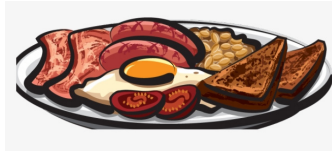
A rota will be available in the church porch in March for anyone to sign for an hour's slot in our Prayer Room. You may of course sign for more than 1 hour.

More details to follow nearer the time.

Events

A date for your diaries for events not to be missed!

The Men's Breakfast on 24 February at 10am. Calling all Men ! If you want a delicious breakfast and to hear from an interesting speaker you need to get your tickets soon. Oh, and there might be a bit of a surprise as well! Tickets from Maureen, Zandra and Ashley.



Crafty Stitches

Crafty Stitches 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.



Clubs and Activities in the Church Hall

Monday

Every week	Groomsport Art Club	1.30 pm	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Second and Fourth Monday	Chattering Needles	7.30 pm	Contact Andrea 07780 628622
Third Monday in the month	Mothers' Union	7.30 pm	Contact Sally 07939 448402
First Monday in the month	Select Vestry meeting	7.30 pm	Contact Heather 07834 771075

Tuesday

First Tuesday in the month	The Tuesday Club	2 pm	Contact Mary 07359 373770
Second Tuesday in the month	Sing for Fun	2 pm (further details in magazine)	Contact Pauline 07745 191808 or Mary 07359 373770

Wednesday

Every week	Mojos Club	9.30 am	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Every week	Prayer for Revival	11 am (in Church)	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
Every week	Scrabble Club	2 pm	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Every week	Crafty Stitchers	2 pm	Contact Susan 07867 782395

Thursday

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

Friday

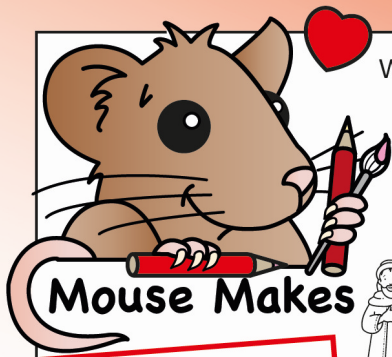
<i>Every Week</i>	Rising Stars Theatre Youth Group	3 pm	Contact Poppy 07711 062137
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Saturday

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

<i>Every Sunday</i>	Sunday Fun Club	9.30 am	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
<i>Fortnightly</i>	Youth Pizza and Games Night	7:30 pm (in local home)	Contact Elliot 07957 724965



Mouse Makes

CONNECT THE BIBLE COUPLES

ADAM	ELIZABETH
ABRAHAM	MARY
ISAAC	HANNAH
JACOB	PRISCILLA
BOAZ	EVE
ZECHARIAH	RUTH
ELKANAH	REBEKAH
AQUILA	RACHEL
JOSEPH	SARAH

Which couple helped the Apostle Paul in his ministry?

_____ and _____ Romans 16:3

Who were the first couple?
_____ and _____

Genesis 2:22-25

Who's wife became a pillar of salt because she disobeyed the angel's warning?

_____ Genesis 19:26

Which of Laban's daughters did Jacob love?

_____ Genesis 29:18

Who was Moses' wife?

_____ Exodus 2:21

Who married Boaz to become King David's great-grandmother and a distant relative of Jesus?

_____ Matthew 1:5

FIND THE BIBLE VERSE

Change each letter in this bible verse to the letter **before** it in the alphabet.

XIBU HPE IBT
KPJOFE UPHFUIFS,
MFU OPU NBO
TFQBSBUF.

NBSL
UFO WFTF
OJOF

DID YOU KNOW?

King Solomon had **700** wives! They were princesses of royal birth and he loved them all, but his wives caused him to turn away from God
See 1 Kings 11:1-3

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

ABRAHAM
ADAM • AQUILA
BOAZ • ELKANAH
ELIZABETH
EVE • HANNAH
ISAAC • JACOB
JOSEPH • MARY
PRISCILLA
RACHEL
REBEKAH • RUTH
SARAH
ZECHARIAH

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Exodus 2:13-4:23, 4:27-5:2

Moses: a Hebrew adopted by an Egyptian princess. He killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave, and hid the body.

The next day...



Why are you beating up one of your own people?

Are you going to kill me like you killed that Egyptian?



Moses had to run away from Egypt.



He went to Midian, got married and looked after his father-in-law's sheep.



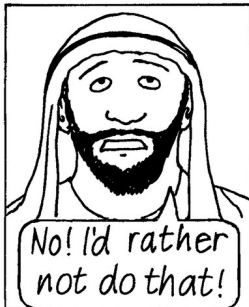
One day, on Sinai Mountain, he saw a burning bush that didn't burn up. Now God had got Moses' attention, He said..



You will go to Pharaoh and tell him to let my people leave Egypt.



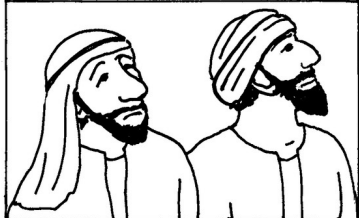
No! I'd rather not do that!



It's not a choice. Your brother Aaron can help you



Aaron and Moses met up and went to see Pharaoh



Our God says you must let all his people leave Egypt.



Your God means nothing to me. I will never change my mind. Your people can never leave!





YOUTH PIZZA + GAMES NIGHTS

**Take a fresh slice from our new pizza & games
home group for teenagers!**

7:30-8:30pm Sundays fortnightly in local home

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

Message Elliot for more info (e.g. dates + address)
if you know a teenager who'd like to try joining
our little group!

elliottgroomsport@gmail.com

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