


JUNE - JULY 24

GROOMSPORT PARISH CHURCH

CONTACT

www.groomsportparishchurch.org



**The Heavens are telling the glory
of God and the firmament
proclaims his handiwork**

Psalm 19: 1

We are Lifeboats

In the last few months several hundred children from across Bangor & Donaghadee have been creating lifeboat-themed artwork for our 'Lionhearted Lifeboats' art exhibition, celebrating 200 years of the RNLI. Here's one amazing piece by Dexter, Adam, Emily and Isabella from Ballyholme Primary School, one of the 7 schools that created artwork for this - showing a heroic night rescue of a little boat in distress.



The image of a Lifeboat is captivating - urgent distress call, crew bravely determined to risk everything, facing roaring winds and consuming waves, saving precious human lives from certain death in the surging foam. No-one ever questions, "Do we really need Lifeboats?" or "Do those people in the sinking ship really need saving?" What about when one of the Lifeboat crew on call gets the call-to-action on their phone, do they say to themselves, "Ah well, I don't agree with the politics of the other people in the crew so I won't go this time" or "I don't like the layout of the seats on the boat, so I think I'll give this a miss"? When it comes to saving lives, controversy, distraction & division dissolve in the face of urgent need. Lifesaving creates amazing unity.

The idea of the people of Jesus, the whole, worldwide Church, being a ship or boat is an ancient image. The word 'nave' used to describe part of a building comes from the Latin *navis* for 'ship' (the root of our word 'Navy'). So, if we as God's people are described as a boat or ship, what kind of boat are we?

The founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, was captivated by this image of a stormy sea. Here are a few snippets from his iconic, intense vision:

"I saw a dark and stormy ocean. ... In that ocean I thought I saw myriads of poor human beings plunging and floating, shouting and shrieking... some sank to rise no more. "

“And I saw out of this dark angry ocean, a mighty rock... And all around the base of this great rock, I saw a vast platform... I saw that a few of those who were already safe on the platform were helping the poor creatures still in the angry waters to reach the place of safety ...

As I looked on, I saw that the occupants of that platform were quite a mixed company. ... But only a very few of them seemed to make it their business to get the people out of the sea... though all had been rescued at one time or another from the ocean, nearly everyone seemed to have forgotten all about it. ... These people did not seem to have any care—that is, any agonising care—about the poor perishing ones who were struggling and drowning before their eyes...

He was struck to the heart that people were living and dying without Jesus (represented by the Rock) in the stormy ocean of this world, which moved him to found a movement reaching out to those who the Church of his day barely managed to care about reaching.

So what kind of boat is the Church? We are a Lifeboat! Our great Captain, Jesus Christ, has sent us out to bring His life into this stormy ocean of a world, to rescue those struggling for life in its waves, and bring them to life in all its fullness (John 10:10)! With such a desperately important mission, we cannot afford infighting, division, controversy over petty issues or distraction from our Captain. For avoidance of any doubt, I am

simply another crew-member with you all, and I have no desire to mutiny on Him! It is His Word, His plans, His ideas - written out for us in that great Lifeboat manual, the Holy Scriptures - this gives our mission to bring the life of Jesus to a distressed & drowning world. His love is our life-ring, to save those in the water!

No-one is excluded from this lifesaving crew - we all have a place on the Lifeboat. What is Jesus calling you to do on His Lifeboat crew? Ask Him to show you - for He is the wisest, kindest, most inclusive, creative and courageous Captain we could ever have!

Elliot Swatbridge



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NIC103258

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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

Hall Matters

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



Sunday 9:30 am - Sunday Fun Club

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

**Wednesday 3 pm - 'Wednesday in the
Word' in the Canon Tyney Hall**

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 above groups will be off during July and August

June and July 2024

The First Sunday after Trinity

2nd June

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 Pauline Harrison, Cathie Brown, Rosemary Adams and Maggie Wilson.

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

7th July

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

Coffee in the church hall after the 10:30 am service. Hosted by Mary Cargill, Gary Keenan, Roy and Amanda McWhinney

The Second Sunday after Trinity

9th June

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

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity

14th July

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

The Third Sunday after Trinity

16th June

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

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

21st July

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

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

23rd June

8:30 am Holy Communion
10:30 am Service of the Word

No Evening Service

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity

28th July

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

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity

30th June

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

There will be no mid-week services in July and August.



Notes from the Vestry

April/May Contact Notes

William and Tony have been in touch with the architect to investigate the damp problems in the church. Jim has repaired the hinges on the front door of the Halls. The locks on the shed at the back of the halls have been sorted, as has the tree at the church. William will also sort a builder to repair the fence at Cove Avenue. Tony has sprayed weeds. Sensors outside halls have yet to be looked at.

Gordon has been researching a floor cleaner instead of a buffer for the floor in the Canon Tyney Hall. Gordon reported that the Head of Environmental Services is happy we have done everything possible with the step towards the back of the Church.

Tony reported that Solarfix have replaced all three batteries, and they are all charging.

It was agreed not to go ahead yet with the purchase of a bigger fridge for the kitchen until the situation can be discussed with Andrew Pearson at the Environmental Health training in April.

Elliot reported there had been a wonderful response from seven schools who had participated in producing paintings on the theme of lifeboats for the Art Exhibition and many of their parents had attended the exhibition. Elliot has done Assemblies in some of the schools. He also informed the Vestry that Millie Bellew from the Diocese has visited

Sunday Fun Club and has asked to use us as a case study.

Kate reported that in Safeguarding, two issues had been raised and were being addressed: groups doing their own risk assessment and ensuring they had fire escape plans and fire drills in place.

The First Aid Response Team will be coming to do defibrillator training on 20 May.

The Wardens thanked everyone for their support and Elliot thanked all Vestry members standing down, especially Florence for all her hard work as Treasurer.

Following the meeting, a barbecue was held, where a cake was presented to Florence to acknowledge her time as Treasurer.

The Soar (planning for the future) evening will take place on the 10 June.

Susan attended her first meeting as Treasurer and explained that the stained-glass window that says, "To this you belong" could also be turned round to say, "This belongs to us!" She was given the approval of the Select Vestry to pursue internet banking for the Church. She gave an account of the finances and asked permission to pay rates of Cove Avenue monthly. She will be looking at any other changes that can be made to save money or time.

Notes from the Vestry

Gordon will report at the next meeting about what constitutes Church events and what constitutes external events.

Elliot reported that there had been three weeks of Harbour Tots and it was proving to be a great success. Ashley is playing a key role in coordinating this, and a rota of helpers has been drawn up.

Elliot was very pleased at the people turning up for Maggie's sea baptism and said it had been a wonderful event.

Maureen thanked Elliot and Susan for all their help with the Art Exhibition. The Coffee morning and book sale will be on 8 June. There will be a break over the summer and then numerous events are planned for the Eagle Wing weekend in September. Gordon and Mae are representing us in the planning stages. Some events will be in our halls and others in the Presbyterian. It will be a massive community event.

Zandra will ask Ashley to make some more laminated numbers for the Church noticeboards.

Gordon was given permission to approve use of the halls for Ashley Medical Centre, Rising Stars and an event for Libby Beach.

A working group of a few Vestry members will start work on forming policies necessary for Church life today.

The Annual Easter Vestry took place on Sunday 14 April after Church. Elliot gave a presentation of some wonderful photographs reflecting the many aspects of Church life in his time as our minister. Accounts were adopted without query. Elliot thanked the office bearers: William, Tony, Bert, Zandra, Florence and Heather and all other Vestry members and presented all of them with a plant.

Bert was appointed Rector's Warden, Zandra was appointed People's Warden, William was appointed Rector's Glebe Warden and Tony was appointed People's Glebe Warden. The following were appointed to the new Select Vestry: Gordon Boyd, Mae Burke, Mary Cargill, Stephen Mccullough, John McKee, Susan McNair, Kate Murray, Heather Pentland, David Scott and Maureen Taggart. At a small meeting after the Easter Vestry, Heather was appointed Secretary and Susan was appointed Treasurer.



2024/2025 Vestry Members



Rev Elliot
Swatridge



Heather Pentland
Vestry Secretary



Bert Smith
Rector's Warden



Zandra Sloan
People's Warden



William McAneney
Rector's Glebe



Tony Anderson
People's Glebe



Susan Mc Nair
Treasurer



Stephen
McCullough



Kate
Murray



Gordon
Boyd



Mae
Burke



Maureen
Taggart



John
McKee



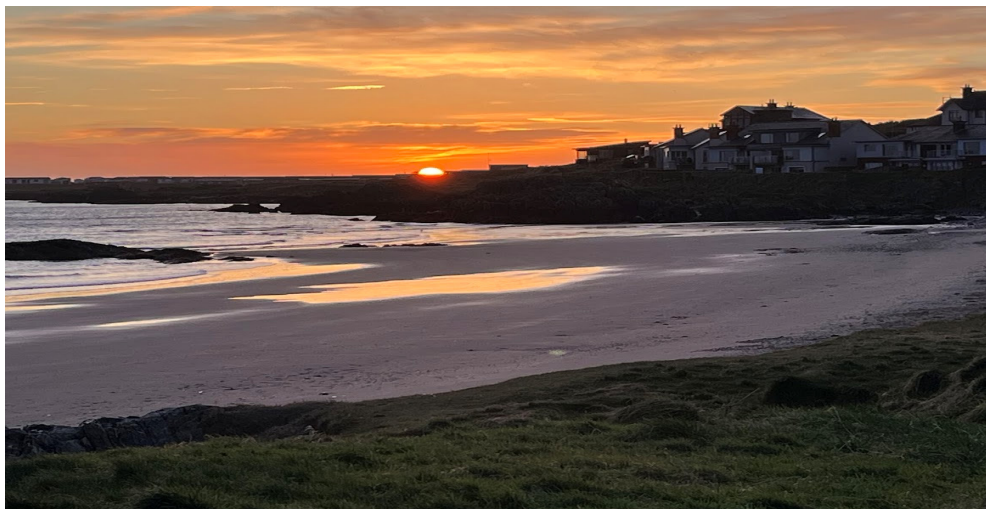
Mary
Cargill



David
Scott

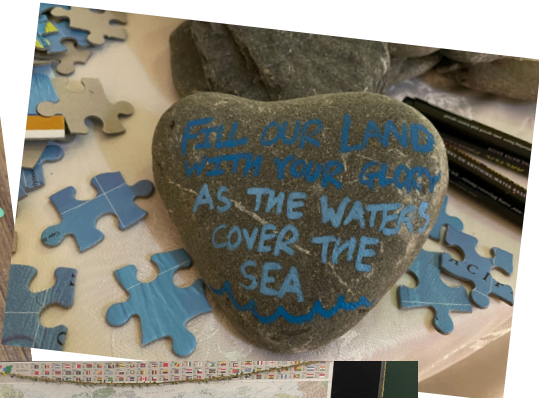
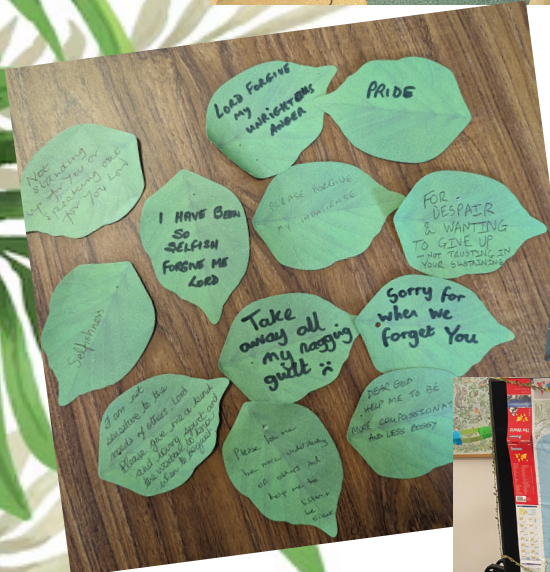
The Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday

The weather was perfect on the Sunday morning. We gathered together on the beach for our service. After some hymns and prayers, we watched in awe as the sun slowly rose above the horizon. What a beautiful moment! To finish, we were treated to cooked breakfast back in the Canon Tyney Hall.



From Our Prayer Room

Holy Week again saw the opening of our annual prayer room. Sunday Fun Club items were temporarily removed from the Avril Morley Room, to make space for our prayer activities and literature. Elliot joined us and brought some new ideas. It became for us that special and much loved haven of peace and prayerful reflection. There were opportunities to read, to draw, write prayers, listen to religious music, make wooden crosses, stained glass windows, design a prayer stone or simply take time to meditate. Everyone felt very blessed by the experience.



Thoughts From Our Prayer Room

Dear Father God. I pray for the miracle of my children drawing close to you, having a full and loving relationship with you. They need you father. I pray you will answer my prayer, in the name of your only son, Jesus Christ.

Dear Father, I pray for peace in the Middle East. Speak to those who are committing all the atrocities in this area. Be with all the ordinary people, who just want to live ordinary lives.

Father, thank you for your love and constancy. Thank you for this place of peace and inspiration. Thank you for all who prepared and set up the space. This is a blessing.

Make us flourish like the Olive tree, planted in the courts of our God, bearing fruit in all stages of life, fresh and green, proclaiming, "The Lord is good, He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness (or cruelty and evil) in Him."

Lord still our hearts and minds so that we hear your voice.

Thank you God for the opportunity to be able to sit in a peaceful room like this. So many countries forbid Christian worship. We are so fortunate. Help us to appreciate the freedom to worship any time we please.

Lord, Every year this room becomes a very special place of silence in a very busy world. Thank you for bringing GPC through over a year without a leader but now thank you so much for the incredible leader in the form of Elliot. So many of us have already learned so much from him. He is an example to all - but he also needs OUR prayers for his ministry and for his personal life. Be with him Lord, give him strength and enable him to also know when HE needs support from others. He is truly a man of God.

Father come close, Father stay close around, above, below, within us. Father stay close and banish the worlds ways which threaten, which overwhelm us, which press us down. Father come close and fill our desolate lives with the light which never dims. Father stay close.

For the love of God is broader than the measure of mankind and the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind.

Dear God, please bless my family all over the world and keep them safe.

The God of all age groups!

God's ways are so much better than ours! So in a world which judges people's worth based on their age, He gives us a different vision. This Pentecost we heard this passage from Acts 2:17-18 and 22, which we also quote every Wednesday in our prayer for revival:

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy... And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

This promise of His Spirit, the very personal Spirit of Jesus, is for all who have been saved by calling on His Name, and so joined into His family. And very striking here is the categories of people who are mentioned: 'men... women' and 'young... old'. These verses firstly categorically deny that one gender has greater access to God than another. Then they also absolutely deny that God's Spirit moves more among the 'young' or the 'old' - He uses every age group without prejudice.

This is why, on the one hand, Jesus says, quoting Psalm 8, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise...", as well as Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them". There is no child too young to love and praise Jesus, or to receive at His table! On the other hand,

some of the most amazing examples of God calling people have been later in their lives - Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born, Moses was 80 when God called him from the burning bush, and Anna was aged at least 84 when she saw the baby Jesus and spoke prophetically to Mary and Joseph about Him. These are three examples among many others!

So if we desire to be faithful to God, we must value all age groups equally, as God is no respecter of age and can call and powerfully use anyone. Our greatest mission may be in our older years - there is no retirement in the Kingdom of God!

Why have lots of new groups aimed at children & their parents/grandparents started?

So you might ask why I have started a number of new groups for children & their parents/grandparents in the 8 months I have been here. The reason for this is that, in my experience, it is more versatile to begin an entirely new group than to radically change something that already exists. Last autumn we had very few families with under 18s, and so I felt very keen to create spaces that are especially for them, such as Sunday Fun Club and Harbour Tots. It is essential to say here that these are not only aimed at children, but also at their parents, people in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s, also age groups which we have relatively little connection with, and also grandparents. One of the most important things to see in connecting with children is that it means connecting not just with a child but with a whole family, including many parents

and grandparents who have no existing connection with church or any faith at present. My desire here is to reach out to the entire age spectrum, by creating bespoke groups that enable this to happen, especially amongst those who struggle to relate to our other Sunday services at present.

It is absolutely critical to state here that the creation of new groups here by no means implies that younger people are of greater worth than older people - this is absolutely NOT the heart of God, as explored above. Instead, it is because we long to reach out to all age groups - whatever category they are in - 0-10s, 10-20s, 20-30s, 30-40s, 40-50s, 50-60s, 60-70s, 70-80s, 80-90s, 90-100+ without preference or prejudice, just as God desires us to. I am very keen that people who perhaps don't relate to normal Sunday services are given creative, 'out of the box' ways to connect with Jesus for themselves.

Should I start more brand new activities?

The main other new regular groups I have started here are Prayer for Revival and Wednesday in the Word (which is a reimagining of the previous Bible study group), which I would love to see anyone at who'd like to try them out! But should I be starting more? ? Part of my thinking has been to not 'reinvent the wheel', or overload ourselves with busyness. There are presently church-led regular activities on most days of the week, which we see many of our regular congregation and wider community connecting with, as well as fantastic special events planned

by the Events Team. If we took on too many more, we risk burning out our very committed teams of volunteers, or neglecting the quality of what we are already doing. Also, as they are all so successful in reaching out to many new faces (e.g. Soup and Scones seems to be growing at an amazing rate with people in the wider community!), I felt my role should be to encourage and be part of what is already happening - e.g. by singing and playing music with Bert at Sing for Fun - rather than starting loads of brand new groups. I instead want to focus more on building up relationships with people, something which I intend to do more of into the summer as most of the midweek groups pause for July and August - and please, please do get in touch with me if you would ever value meeting individually to chat more about your faith.

I would be also be completely open if you have a new idea for a new regular group or one-off event - particularly something about exploring our faith in Jesus together - and are happy to help run it and bring together a team of volunteers, for you to bring it to me, and if we can fit it in logistically we would be absolutely delighted to enable this to happen! So we long to follow the heart of God to value and truly reach out to all age groups with equal creativity and passion, as all are deeply valued and loved in His eyes. If you ever feel neglected or forgotten, please tell me and I would love to speak openly about how to change this and make sure that we are a family in Christ where we can say to absolutely everyone, to all age groups, "To this you belong!"

Wednesday in the Word

Bible study - 3-4pm Wednesdays

Exploring Jesus in the Gospel of John together



Location: Canon Tyney Hall, Wednesdays weekly 3-4pm

Begins weekly from May 29, not on in July/August, restarts weekly from Sept 4

Don't worry if you can't make every week - just come when you can!



Prayer for Revival

11AM WEDNESDAYS

Each week, a little group of us gather around a map of Northern Ireland to pray for **revival** - which means for people everywhere to be 'revived' spiritually - to be joined to the new life of Christ.

- (1)** First, we light candles reading promises from Scripture for revival (e.g. Isaiah 44)
- (2)** Second, we reflect through listening to a piece of music
- (3)** Third, we have a time of open prayer, for people to pray either silently or out loud, however they feel led.

Please do join us if you love to pray for new life in Northern Ireland!

From the Registers

Reaffirmation Baptism

28th April 2024 - **Maggie Wilson**

Holy Rest

1st May 2024 - **Phyl Tweedie**

We pray for her husband John, son Jack and daughter Tara. May she rest in Peace and Rise in Glory.



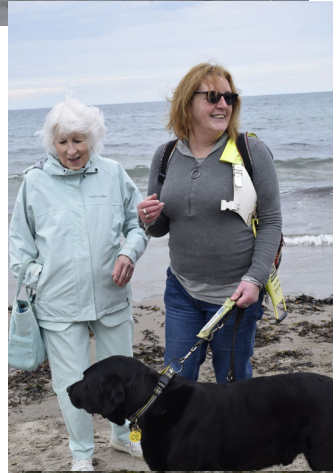
Harbour Tots'

We have had a fantastic start to our Harbour Tot's Group. We have an average of around 30 children join us each week and we are starting to get to know all the names and faces of the children. We have had lots of lovely feedback from parents over the weeks to. We will be taking a break over July and August and plan to start back Friday 6th September. Thank you to all our Harbour Tot's Crew who have made this such a success!



Sea Baptism

Sunday 28th April was a special day for the Parish, and particularly for Maggie Wilson. She had decided to renew her Baptismal vows by having a sea baptism. After a short service in church where Maggie gave her testimony, everyone walked down to the nearby beach. And there Elliot and Maggie walked together into the sea, where Maggie was fully immersed and baptised by Elliot. A very special and unique occasion for everyone concerned.



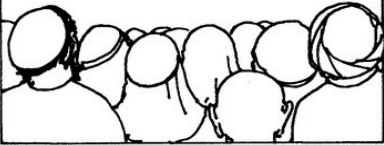
Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Ex.19:3-9,20:1-21,24:7,12-18,32:1-25,34:1-9

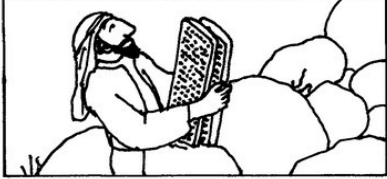
God rescued the Hebrew people from
Egypt and led them to Sinai mountain.
There He offered them a contract....

Keep My rules, and you will
be My people and I will be
your God and protect you.



We promise to do
what You tell us
and worship only You.

Moses climbed the mountain.
God gave him two stone slabs
with the contract on them.



Then God and
Moses talked ... for
40 days and nights



Meanwhile...

Aaron, that Moses isn't coming back. We
can't worship something we can't see.



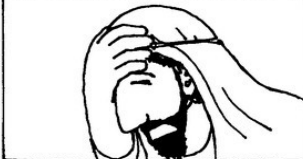
Make us
something we
can worship

So Aaron made a gold bull
and the people went wild.

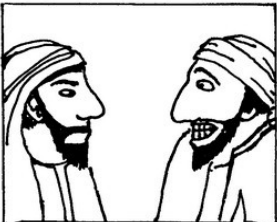


God told Moses....

Your people are already
worshipping a statue.



Moses was so angry he
smashed the contract
slabs



God, please, please
forgive Your people.



It's not my fault,
they made me do it.

So God forgave His people and gave
Moses two more contract slabs.



India 2024

Noel and I were very fortunate to spend four fantastic weeks travelling in India earlier this year. We can only hope to give you a glimpse of a country, full of contrasts, in this article.

We started our adventures in New Dehli, a mixture of the old and the new. While there is still considerable poverty the signs of growth are very evident with its modern buildings, new infrastructure, and high tech companies. Yet side by side is traditional India, a hotch potch of street sellers, old run down buildings, bazars and tuk tuks . The city has been shaped by former empires with ancient forts and tombs, some of them dating back 6000 years. Monuments such as the Qutab Minar, or Victory Tower, which is a United World Heritage site or Humayun's Tomb demonstrate building skills which have been lost over time.

Of particular note was a visit to Birla House where Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated at an inter faith prayer meeting. It is now a monument to him and tells the story of a unique statesman who believed 'all men are brothers' and who fought all his life against violence. It was a sad but uplifting place to visit.

Our next port of call was Agra, the home of the Taj Mahal, a world heritage site. The first glimpse of the monument simply takes your breath away. Clad in pearlescent white marble intricately inlaid with calligraphy, semi precious stones and floral designs, it certainly lives

up to its description as the most beautiful building in the world.



The highlight of our visit to Amritsar, on the border with Pakistan, was undoubtedly the Golden Temple, the pre-eminent spiritual site of Sikhism. The huge complex is a collection of beautiful buildings around the sanctum, built in marble and copper and overlaid in gold leaf, sitting in a man made pool . Around 150,000 people visit the holy shrine everyday for worship. The Temple is an open house for all walks of life and faith and we were certainly very warmly welcomed by the crowds there. Before leaving Amritsar we visited the Wagah Border Ceremony. Despite the tense relationships between India and Pakistan



every night the border guards put on a colourful ceremony to mark the closing of the border. Thousands gather at either side of the border to cheer on their respective counties. While it is a symbol of rivalry it ends with a soldier on each side shaking hands.

On to the beautiful city of Udaipur sitting on Lake Pichola with its palaces, forts, temples and streets full of markets and people. Sitting high above the lake is the huge City Palace, still the home of the Maharaja, but now also housing hotels. The main part of the palace is open as a museum with a garden, courtyards and rooms extravagantly decorated with mirrors, tiles, paintings and thousands of artifacts. Looking across the lake from the City Palace is the fabulous Lake Palace, once the summer residence of the Maharaja, now also a hotel. During afternoon tea, on the lawn of our hotel in the City Palace, seven members of the Palace Guards arrived in full regalia, to play us Scottish music on bagpipes, surreal!

From Udaipur we travelled to Shimla, in the Himalayas, the summer capital of the British when governing India. It was full of history of Indian/ Anglo relations having hosted many important political meetings including those leading up to Independence. We learned of a local connection as the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava had been Viceroy and Governor General of India based in Shimla in the late 1880s and was responsible for building the Viceregal Lodge, a magnificent building, the home for subsequent Viceroys. The British

influence was also evident in the wide range of churches in the town. Of particular interest was Christchurch which was Anglican but now comes under the banner of the Church of North India formed in 1970 bringing together six Christian denominations.

Our final stop was Jaipur, also known as the Pink City, given the colour of many of its old buildings. It has a wealth of beautiful architecture, not least the fairy tale Amber Fort and the City Palace. We were fortunate to be there for the Holi Festival when Hindus celebrate, the beginning of Spring. Streets are crowded with people in great spirits throwing coloured powder and water at anyone within range.

India is a country full of contrasts between the old and new and the rich and poor. However a real emphasis on education for all is clearly driving one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Hopefully in time the benefits of that growth will reach all of its people.



Maureen Taggart

Let's GROW:

Some of us went along to 3 nights of our Diocese's GROW initiative, seeking "to resource your church for growth", on Sun-Tues 12-14 May. They were open to everyone and were very inspiring - here are a few takeaway points for us all:

Sunday 12 May "Keeping evangelism at the top of the agenda", by Bishop David

Mary Cargill went especially to represent us at this and wrote that she found the evening very inspiring. Bishop David spoke about something very close to his heart - evangelism, meaning to share the Good News of Jesus with people who don't yet have a personal, saving faith in Him. It doesn't matter whether they have never been in church before, or have been coming to church for decades but without a real connection to Jesus - evangelism seeks for everyone to come to know Him for themselves. Bishop David's great challenge to us is to make this 'top of the agenda' - this means other things like finance, buildings, legal compliance, events, groups all are not ends in themselves, but only means to bring people closer to Jesus - and are only valuable insofar as we are brought deeper in relationship with Him. This helps shift our priorities to make sure we are not obsessed by things that seem important in our eyes, or in the eyes of society, and keep the beautiful mission of people being drawn closer to Jesus at the centre of everything. Other things might still be good and important as secondary matters, but only in a derivative sense, insofar as they lead people closer to Him. As Jesus says, "apart from Me you can do nothing".



Here's the challenging question for us: If we're honest with ourselves, what are our greatest priorities as a church family? What drives us, fires us up (makes us angry?!), makes us passionate, enthusiastic, even desperate? Often these things are signs of what really matters to us. Will we dare to ask the question: is this truly in line with the heart of God, which is to bring us all closer to Jesus? Let's pray that He might give us a new heart that beats with His love, a love that longs for every lost soul to know Him!

Monday 13 May - "Worship services full of the presence of God", by Reverend Eoghan Heaslip

After a wonderful time of worship through music, Eoghan spoke on Luke 20:20-26, where Jesus is questioned by religious leaders to trap Him in His words on paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus famously gives a cryptic, profound response, "...give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Eoghan spoke of how worship must not be forced, hypocritical and inauthentic



3 inspiring nights with our Diocese!

(like the religious leaders of the day) - it is much more than a cold duty that is borne with gritted teeth, and it should never be a source of personal self-righteous pride. Instead, we are created, like coins, bearing the 'image' of our Creator, and that means our hearts are most at home with our God - and so true worship comes not from willpower but from the depth of who we are, our hearts, emotions, affections. Worship is a homecoming back to God, like the Lost Coin or Lost Son in Luke 15. Our services must nurture this return to God, otherwise they are simply empty form and completely missing the point.

Our response to this, Eoghan argued, is threefold: (1) To nurture a personal fire, our own closeness to God when we are on our own. (2) To be open to all sorts of patterns & styles of worship, to see what 'fits' our community by nurturing true, heartfelt return to God. (3) A posture of practice - being willing to ask God's Spirit to move however He wants, even if this feels like 'risk', open even to God to radically change our plans and move us out of 'the ways things have always been' into new horizons!

Tuesday 14 May - "Creating healthy Christian communities" by Reverend Alistair Graham

Alistair spoke to us about the need to "imagine better" - to visualise a possible future that can be so much better than our present. Things don't always have to be the way they currently are. He spoke of the poem, "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, which spoke about a sense of the 'tide going out' on the 'Sea of Faith'. This was the poet's view in the 1860s... yet is this still the case 150 years later? Alistair gave an emphatic, "No!" - proclaiming instead, "The tide has turned!" He gave a selection of wonderful stories of how the 'tide of faith' in Jesus is dramatically beginning to return in our day after fears that it was going out forever. One of these included the amazing estimate that 7 million people are becoming Christians each year in the world - God doing that miracle of new birth (John 3) in millions of precious lives each year. That's well over 3 times the population of Northern Ireland!



He gave us these two deep questions - ones we can only answer for ourselves:

(1) What are we living for? (2) What are we dying for?

"A rising tide lifts all ships" - and as the tide of God's Spirit rises all over the world, He will too come to the shores of Groomsport! Our desire to pray is an early sign of a change in tide... do you feel moved in the depth of your heart to seek God?

Want to explore more? You can watch any of these talks on YouTube - just type this link into your browser - bit.ly/DioceseGrow

Art Exhibition

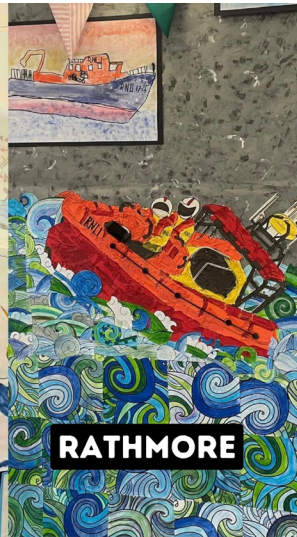
Our Art Exhibition in May, the first since covid, was a great success, outreaching into the community. There was a wide variety of paintings, all by local artists, together with a wonderful display of children's art from seven local primary schools, using Lion-Hearted Lifeboats as their theme. We were delighted to have our Mayor and other dignitaries visit us.

Thanks to everyone who helped make this such a memorable event.





TOWERVIEW



RATHMORE



KILCOOLEY

GROOMSPORT PARISH CHURCH PRESENTS...

LIONHEARTED LIFEBOATS

PRIMARY SCHOOLS ART EXHIBITION

Schools across Bangor & Donaghadee were asked if they would like to contribute artwork to a special exhibition celebrating 200 years of the RNLI Lifeboats saving lives from stormy seas. We had a great uptake, with hundreds of local children getting involved from 7 primary schools. Here are some pictures (see Facebook for more!)



GRANGE PARK



DONAGHADEE



BALLYVESTER

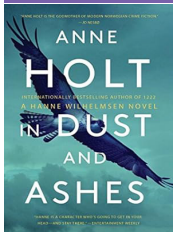


BALLYHOLME

Book Reviews for the Summer by Carol

As I write this I am uncertain whether you will read it before June 8th which is our Book Fair. I hope to have a great selection of books available for all ages. We now have a really good children's section and I will have many books from our family as our grandchildren grow up. Do feel free to contribute nonfiction books nearer the time. As you will know we have no room to store them but it is good to have a selection available for the fairs.

In Dust and Ashes by Anne Holt

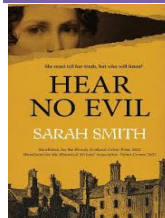


Although I enjoy a good crime fiction novel I have never read any Scandinavian stories which seem to be so popular at the moment. This story is a good one and typically complex,

made harder for me initially as the names of the characters were so 'alien' to our way of speaking and reading. We have Kjell, Hanne, Henrik, Jonas, Silje, Halvor, and Iselin to name but a few. I found these names hard to remember to begin with although I gradually found them more recognisable and familiar. Hanne Wilhelmsen has been the chief character in a series of ten of Anne Holt's novels, she is an intelligent, forceful character who is a wheelchair user and a police officer, at least at the start of the series of novels. In this story she is working in a more independent capacity it seems to me. A retiring police officer, Kjell Bonsaksen is haunted by a case he worked on many years ago in which he

was involved in the conviction of a man who he came to believe was innocent. Shortly before the officer's retirement, as he reflects on the life he hopes to move to in the French countryside, he encounters the convicted man, now freed from prison at the end of a long sentence. Kjell is prompted to unearth the case files and take them to Henrik Holme the current cold case specialist. Although initially sceptical about the case as strictly speaking it is not a 'cold case', Henrik's mentor, Hanne Wilhelmsen is more enthusiastic about the case and before long has a strong feeling that the case is linked to a current high profile case where a right wing extremist activist and blogger has apparently committed suicide. The working out of the plot reveals many surprises and new evidence and although complex it is also fast moving. This particular story is the final one in the Hanne Wilhelmsen series so if you like the sound of it you might like to start at the beginning with the first of the series, "Blind Goddess".

Hear No Evil Sarah Smith

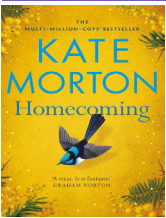


This novel is based on a landmark case in Scottish legal history and is the story of a profoundly deaf woman who is accused of murdering her baby in Glasgow in 1817. Unable to defend herself because

she has neither hearing nor speech, a teacher from the Deaf and Dumb institute in Edinburgh is asked to help gain some insight into what the woman has to say for herself.

The result is a moving and dramatic story very much of its time. Robert Kinnsburgh, the teacher, has the job of finding out if the young woman, Jean, is fit to face trial. If found guilty she will either be hanged or placed in an insane asylum. Gradually he discovers that Jean had agreed because of her desperate situation to give the baby to a childless wealthy couple in exchange for a generous fee. As he gains her trust he gradually becomes not merely an interpreter but an investigator as he comes to believe that she is entirely innocent of the murder. This is an intriguing story, all the more so for having actually occurred.

Homecoming by Kate Morton

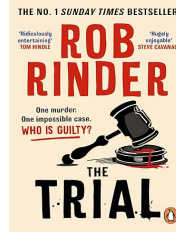


I enjoy the work of Kate Norton, though having read a number of her books I would be the first to admit that there is a clear formula to her work. The stories involve a family home of some dramatic

or historic interest, a younger woman who has moved away and an elderly woman who has experienced something dramatic earlier in life which comes to impinge on later generations. Nevertheless the characters are likeable and the writing atmospheric and interesting. This is no exception. Jess, left with her grandmother at the age of ten, has grown up in Australia. Her mother cannot cope with a child and the relationship between Jess and her grandmother is strong. As a young adult Jess decides to go to London to work but keeps in regular affectionate contact with Nora, her grandmother. Simultaneously we are told the story from sixty years

previously when Nora was a young woman and a great tragedy occurred. When Nora is taken ill, Jess books a flight on the first plane back and starts to uncover her past, revealing long kept secrets about the family.

Trial by Rob Rinder



I thoroughly enjoyed this story. It grips you very quickly and moves along, despite the intricacies of the law, quickly. Adam is a pupil barrister, serving a year in that position

as he waits to see if he will be accepted. He is challenged to the extreme by his first case, the murder of a much admired public hero. Adam is idealistic, hard working, socially inept and very inexperienced although definitely likeable and his pupil master is a pompous, vain, womaniser who is not particularly interested in the case as there is little to be gained by defending the “old lag” who is accused of the murder. The story is peopled with a wide variety of interesting characters and the processes of law made understandable and clear, with a distinct air of compromising the apparent glamour of law courts. The sheer volume of material to be researched and studied, the extraordinarily long hours the pupils have to serve and the conflict between what seems to be right and what has to be done, challenging. I found the book hard to put down and was gripped to the end, which has a surprising twist. I look forward to his next book, due this summer.

Walking for Softies

Our March walk saw us in Antrim Castle Gardens. The weather was dull and drizzly, but that didn't stop us. The rain didn't last, so we were able to enjoy the gentle exercise, the craic and not least, the delicious coffee and scones afterwards in the Diana's Tea Rooms.



April had us at the National Trust gardens at Rowallane, just outside Saintfield. A pleasant morning gave added delight to the colours and scents of the glorious array of Rhododendrons and Azaleas. Nature's beauty and bounty was everywhere. The birds added their song. It all felt good to be alive. We finished, as ever, with refreshments and cheerful craic in the garden's cafe.



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Mothers' Union is a world wide organisation for women of all ages. We have over forty members in Groomsport Parish MU.

This year started with the AGM chaired by Elliot. He thanked the outgoing committee and paid special tribute to Faith Cully who was Branch Leader for several years.

The Diocesan Treasurer, Lynda Bremner, gave a very interesting overview of how MU funds are used for a range of projects at home. This included prison visits, and books distributed to children and their parents in prison, to help maintain a relationship by having something to talk about during prison visits. Also there is ongoing support for local refugees. She talked about Worldwide Parenting Programmes and Literacy and Financial Education.

Our February meeting enjoyed a very inspirational speaker, Melanie Douglas. She told us, in word and song, about many of the difficult situations she had faced in life. With her very strong faith, and the power of prayer, she has been able to overcome many challenges.

In Holy Week Mothers Union lead a very moving service "Through the eyes of Jesus' Mother" in word, prayer and hymns.

At our meeting on 15th April we heard from Rebecca Parnell about the Leprosy Mission in India and challenged us to think about how we could support bringing an end to leprosy. Also Hester Kelly told us about the various ways in which we continue to support Women's Aid, and the Ulster Hospital, by providing toiletries, knitted clothes for babies and handmade bags for syringe drivers.

Some of our members attended the Festival Service in Dromore Cathedral on 21st March when the Diocesan Chaplain, Rev Duncan Pollock was leading the worship.

Our outing in May is a tour of Stormont followed by afternoon tea hosted by Alan Chambers MLA.

Our next meeting is in September. All ladies are very welcome to attend any of the meetings without any obligation, and there will always be a cup of tea!

Sally Mckee, MU Branch Leader

Sing for Fun

Pauline Harrison and Mary Cargill started this group last October. It was originally aimed at people with dementia and their carers – somewhere to go and spend some time listening to music and joining in with the songs. We have typed out the words of lots of well – known popular songs, sometimes to a certain theme – wartime; romance and of course Irish and Scottish music. We decided to ask everyone to come along to swell the numbers, and after Pauline’s delicious scones and a cup of tea, everyone is obviously very pleased and ready to join in. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month, October to June in the Maxwell Hall at 2 pm. It usually lasts for 45 minutes and we have obtained the services of instrumentalists who are happy to be a part of the venture. It is a community event, free of charge, although we do leave out a basket for voluntary donations. Come and give it a try – you might enjoy it.



Mojo's

Mojo's may only a small group of ladies but they have still managed to give a very generous donation to the Air Ambulance NI. Well done to everyone involved.



An Extraordinary Day

My name is Cleopas and I was walking with my companion back home, from Jerusalem to Emmaus where we live. To be honest we didn't really know why we were going home, we were so bewildered, grief stricken and simply lost that we didn't know what to do. We had been following the prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, for some time and were amazed at all he said and did. We joined the followers who had been with him from the beginning but now it looked as if all that we had hoped for the future was lost.

He came into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, of all things. But he was greeted like a conquering king, people threw their cloaks on the road as he approached and we all cheered to welcome him. It was very moving. We had so many hopes for the future, but then it all died as Jesus himself died when they crucified him. He just made too many enemies, despite the fact that he had so many followers. Perhaps that was it, the Roman authorities saw him as a troublemaker and rabble rouser, our Jewish leaders didn't like the fact that he did things his own way and didn't always obey the rules that they thought were so important. We knew he was right which was why we stayed with him but then when he died it all seemed to come to nothing. We didn't know what to think.

Confused and miserable we decided to go back home, no good reason really, we were just adrift, didn't know what else we could or should do. Those closest to

him stayed in Jerusalem but there didn't seem much point really. Some of the women following him said that they had seen angels, telling them that Jesus was alive but some of the disciples had been to the tomb and saw nothing except that it was empty. They were lying low for fear of the Roman authorities. As we walked, and it's a fair old walk back to Emmaus, we mulled over what had happened still trying to make sense of it all. We were overtaken by a stranger, who, as he drew level with us, slowed to our pace and asked us what we were talking about so sadly. We were astonished that he did not know, after all, the crucifixion of Jesus was the talking point of Jerusalem and this man seemed to have come from there. He listened to what we told him, but despite the fact that he had asked us, didn't seem at all surprised by our answers, instead he started to explain the meaning of the events. He certainly knew his bible. He went through one prophet after another showing us the relevance of what had occurred and we were very moved, it was beginning to make some sort of sense. Although the grief didn't lessen we were certainly fired up with a new sense of relevance, I can't put it any better than that. We were really deeply stirred by the connections that we were beginning to make.

The rest of our journey passed in no time and as it was growing dark we invited our new companion to stay with us and share our food. He looked as though he would continue on his journey but then agreed. However when we gathered round the

the food laid before us, as I prepared to give thanks our new friend took over and gave thanks for the bread himself and broke it.....Suddenly we knew! It was Jesus himself He was the Messiah and as we realised it he disappeared. Now the understanding came flooding in. That was why we were so moved by his explanations of why He had to suffer and die, that was why he showed us that it had all been there in the writings of Isaiah and others.

Leaving our food and forgetting our weariness we hurried back to Jerusalem to tell His friends that we had seen the Lord. We simply could not wait to share the good news. When we got there *the disciples and some other followers*

were there excitedly discussing their news. Jesus had appeared to Simon. We all shared our news and talked over what Jesus had said to us. We had a lot to tell after that long walk! The mood was so different from when we had left Jerusalem and we all gave thanks.

Carol



Plant Sale and Christian Aid Coffee Morning

We had a very busy morning in the village on Saturday 11th May as we had both the plant sale in one hall and the Christian Aid coffee morning (joint with Groomsport Presbyterian) in the other! Both were very popular which is great news!



The Tuesday Club

Here we are in June already! Such a busy year we have had so far. Thank you again to everyone who supported our concert I January – I was amazed when we counted the money you donated.

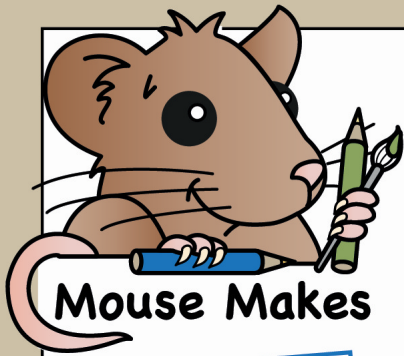
After expenses, we were able to give the guide dogs association £2,000, and we are continuing to support them in whatever way we can. We have two fireside quizzes prepared at £2 each and the closing date is our AGM in September. Please let me know if you would like to take part in this amazing quiz, and I will bring you an entry form.

In July, we are having as our speaker, Jennifer Gilmour, the immediate past mayor. She has been so busy since she took office as confirmed by the multitude of photographs in the Spectator.

There will be a couple more open meetings before the end of the year, and I will tell you more about these in a future issue of Contact.

Mary - 07359 373770





Mouse Makes

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

TFF XIBU LJOE PG
MPWF UIF GBUIFS
IBT HJWFO UP VT
UIBU XF TIPVME
CF DBMMFE
DIJMESFO PG HPE
POF KPUI UISFF: POF

Solomon's father defeated a giant and became a King. Who was he?

1 Samuel 48-50

Whose daughter was healed by Jesus?

Mark 5:21

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

WHO IS MY FATHER?

Who was created by God and became the first father?

Genesis 2:20

Who had a son when he was very old?

Genesis 21:5

Shem Ham and Japheth's father built a huge boat, who was he?

Genesis 6:10-14

Who gave his son Joseph a robe of many colours?

Genesis 37:2-3



This Roman puzzle square reads the same from the top, bottom and sides and translates: "Arepo the sower guides the wheel with skill."

R	O	T	A	S
O	P	E	R	A
T	E	N	E	T
A	R	E	P	O
S	A	T	O	R

If you rearrange the letters it can spell **PATER NOSTER** which means "Our Father".

A	P	A	T	E	R	N	O	S	T	E	R	O
A	P	A	T	E	R	N	O	S	T	E	R	O

Look up the Bible verses to find the fathers then look for them and the words below in the word search.

FATHER • GOD
SON • DAUGHTER
JOSEPH • ISAAC
MOSES • JOB
SOLOMON
ZECHARIAH
ZEBEDEE