

JAN - FEB 2025

GROOMSPORT PARISH CHURCH

CONTACT

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



MAY ALL THE BLESSINGS  
..... OF THE LORD .....  
BE YOURS IN ABUNDANCE  
IN THE *New Year.*

ISAIAH 43:19

# V is for Victory

Dear friends,

Have you seen them? When we walk Wesley the dog on Groomsport beach, one beautiful sight in the sky is that characteristic 'V' shape - as our feathered friends fly in mesmerising convoy.

Geese are truly wonderful creatures. In the early centuries after our Lord's resurrection, as the Gospel was just beginning to spread in these very islands we live in now, our Christian forebears loved the symbol of 'Wild Goose' to symbolise God's Holy Spirit, since the goose is unpredictable and surprising, just like the work of the Spirit. As Jesus said:

*"The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."* (John 3:8)

I particularly love the reason behind the 'V' shape flying pattern of geese. The way they fly in the slipstreams of their fellows saves vast amounts of energy, compared to if they were to go alone. The front geese, which bear more of the force of the wind, periodically swap themselves out for others and then go further back in the 'V' in order to get a rest. This enables them to go much further together, as well as helping communication. Some sources even say that, if a goose has to drop out of formation due to injury, a couple of others will go after it to help and protect it until it is ready to fly again.

For geese it is a matter of life and death - they cannot afford to fight, squabble and attack one another - if they want to survive, and thrive, they need to fly together.

What a poignant metaphor for us! If we fly together in formation - going the same direction, communicating constantly, sharing the load of being 'at the front', watching out if one of us ever gets wounded by life - we can go so far together!

As Psalm 133:1 says, *"How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!"*

My earnest hope and prayer for 2025 is that we can 'fly together', not allowing anything to divide us. This is one of the reasons why we have been working with Select Vestry on our Vision & Mission - to give us a shared direction together (see later pages of the Contact for more about this) and help everything we do to shine the light of Christ to this dark world.

Oneness is worth fighting for... and, oh my, it is a fight! While we still live here in this broken world, there will always be plenty of distractions, offences and controversies thrown our way... but it is up to us what we do with them! The 'normal' human response is to get frustrated, even angry, and to leave, and break off relationships. But surely we can be better than this, with God's help? Will we allow disagreements and offences to divide and destroy our family in Christ, or will we resolutely fight for the oneness that pleases the heart of God? Will we follow our Lord's prayer to, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"? Forgiveness is hard but is so worth it for the wonderful healing it brings to our hearts. Will we refuse to spread accusations and gossip? Will we always try to think the best of one another? Will we refuse to be outraged and offended, even if we think we are justified? These are hard asks, but if we ask the help of God, nothing is impossible. And it is so worth it!

If we fly together, we will go to new realms of wonderful glory together, flying on the fresh breeze of God's Spirit. This is the invite He is calling us to as we enter the second quarter of this century together!

'V' is for victory!

*Elliot Swatridge*



WHO ARE WE AS GROOMSPORT PARISH CHURCH?

# 'A Lighthouse People'

*Loving Jesus, the Light of the World,  
longing to share His light with others*



Dear family in Christ, we have been praying about our vision for this next season of our life together as a family in Christ, 2025 and beyond:



**OUR VISION** is Jesus, the Light of the World. We dream of a day when a great multitude from all Groomsport, Bangor and the ends of the earth come to His light, to adore Him forever!



**OUR MISSION** is to become 'A Lighthouse People', everything we do blazing with the One who is Light of the World, showing people lost in the dark, rough seas of this world the way home into the bright, safe harbour of Jesus Christ forever.

## 5 KEY ASPIRATIONS FOR 2025 & BEYOND

to fuel our mission to shine brighter as 'A Lighthouse People'



**GOSPEL LIFEBOATS** - To become a lifeboat station of the Gospel - where all of us, without exception, have a place on the crew! We are each on call to watch the high seas of our daily lives for opportunities to shine, by not hiding our faith away but expressing our joy & love for Him, inviting people closer into the harbour of Jesus.



**OUTPOST OF PRAYER FOR REVIVAL** - Prayer is our lighthouse's power source. Without prayer, we will not shine! We pray for revival in all we do, for God to pour out His Spirit like water, bringing salvation to multitudes in our spiritually dry land.



**IN OUR POTTER'S HANDS** - His plans are much better than ours, so we want to be soft clay, moulded by Holy Scripture, feasting on His words, sustained by Holy Communion, where His Spirit is free to flow in our praise, open to God's surprises!



**WE ARE FAMILY** - To be born again as God's children - this is what 'church' truly is, a family, not a building or institution. We want to be a family of true belonging for all ages, nationalities & backgrounds, full of love & forgiveness & gossip-free - outward-looking, inviting others to belong too. A place where no-one feels forgotten or left out!



**TO A BIGGER PICTURE WE BELONG** - To be caught up in a bigger picture, as a little jigsaw piece in God's beautiful plans for the whole world - deeply connected to our whole family in Christ, of every denomination, locally and in every nation.

**NEXT STEPS?** To this you belong! Dare to pray that God would reveal what ways He has for you to shine bright as one of His lighthouse people...



## Minister

Elliot Swattridge - 07957 724965  
elliotsport@gmail.com

## The Rector's Warden

Bert Smith  
bert@groomsportparishchurch.org

## The People's Warden

Zandra Sloan  
zandra@groomsportparishchurch.org

## The Rector's Glebe Warden

Billy McAneney  
billy@groomsportparishchurch.org

## The People's Glebe Warden

Tony Anderson  
tony@groomsportparishchurch.org

## Treasurer

Susan Mc Nair  
susan@groomsportparishchurch.org

## Secretary to Select Vestry

Heather Pentland  
heather@groomsportparishchurch.org

## Parish Administrator

Ashley Rogan  
028 9127 1311  
gpcoffice@btinternet.com

The Parish Halls  
Main Street  
Groomsport  
Co Down  
BT19 6JR

028 91271311  
gpcoffice@btinternet.com



NIC103258

## Sunday Fun Club

Maggie Townsley  
maggie@groomsportparishchurch.org

## Verger / Caretaker

Susan Moore  
028 9127 1311

## Gift Aid Secretary

Ashley Rogan  
028 9127 1311

## Church Hall Bookings

Gordon Boyd  
gordon@groomsportparishchurch.org

## Hall Matters

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

## Archivist

Ian Sloan - gpcoffice@btinternet.com



## October/November Contact Notes

A CCTV notice has been placed in the Church. The sensor lights outside the halls have been sorted. Following some research by Ashley, it has been decided to remain with BT Broadband rather than change provider. William has arranged to meet the architect and East Down Construction about the damp patch in the church. The Church alarm system needs addressing. As a fire precaution, it was agreed the Wardens would open the side door of the Church before services.

Because of rising printing costs, the Select Vestry has agreed to allow sponsorship for the Contact magazine.

Vestry Members agreed we could not host refreshments after the Village Remembrance Service for insurance reasons, but Select Vestry Members agreed to provide sandwiches for the occasion.

Heather wrote to Greenisland Parish following their arson attack to let them know they were in our prayers.

All paperwork is now in order for Maggie Townsley to proceed with Kids Cove.

Elliot has shared the report written by John and himself following our SOAR Vision and Strategy planning evening earlier in the year. Elliot will be sharing this with the parish.

Harbour Tots has now around 30 children each week. This is only able to operate each week because of the tremendous work

put in by Elliot and Ashley our administrator and the willing band of volunteers each week. Numbers of teenagers for our Youth Evenings are increasing session by session, but urgently needs a volunteer rota like Harbour Tots. It is hoped some parishioners will come forward.

Kate, our Safeguarding Officer, has confirmed that the annual return has been submitted. There is now a new accident book for children only. The other book will be for adults only. Thanks were expressed to Maureen for the very successful Afternoon Tea.

Suggestions for the Christmas Appeal were discussed.

Some changes have been made to the format of Vestry meetings so that they do not become too lengthy – this involves having some reports submitted prior to the meeting, having a time limit on agenda items and changing AOB to Any Other Notified Business prior to the meeting. The November meeting proved to be a very efficient meeting.

As part of the Vision and Strategy planning, a new Pastoral Team has been formed as well as a Strategic Prayer Team. Many prayers have been answered already.

The Pet blessing was very well received in the community. The Bishop has asked to film in our Church for his Lenten series, so this will involve a little disruption.

Thank you - from Heather



I am delighted to have this opportunity to say thank you so much for your wonderful support for my million -step challenge during July, August and September. This is to let you know that, with your help and the money raised at the Tropic Pamper Evening, the final total was £3,306 plus Gift Aid, much more than I could ever have hoped for. Thank you. Heather



EST. **TREAT STREET** 2008  
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028 9065 8369 treatstreetballyhack@outlook.com

**HARBOUR TOTS**  
Our new parent & toddler group

**FRIDAY MORNINGS - OPEN 10-11:30AM**  
...in our church halls, 30 Main St, Groomsport, BT19 6JR  
Includes open play with toys, tunnels and ball pits, and story & song time...  
Free of charge and all parents & grandparents welcome!

## kids menu

UNDER 12's ONLY

FRY	£5.95
PIZZA CHIPS	£5.95
5 NUGGETS CHIPS	£5.95
2 SARGAGES CHIPS AND BEANS	£5.95
HAM CHEESE PANINI	£5.95

SANDWICHES WITH ANY 2 FILLINGS	£5.95
2 PANCAKES WITH MITELLA OR SYRUP	£5.95
FRENCH TOAST WITH BACON AND SYRUP	£5.95
CHEESE BURGER CHIPS	£6.25
PLAIN BURGER	£5.95

# Harvest Afternoon Tea

This year we decided to hold our yearly Afternoon Tea at Harvest rather than Christmas. This again proved to be a very popular event with the hall packed and buzzing with chatter and laughter, The hall was beautifully decorated in harvest colours with pumpkins, wreaths, harvest leaves and colourful posters. On the tables were plates of sandwiches, scones with jam and cream, apple creams, truffles, meringues, traybakes and of course the ever popular lemon possets all made by our very talented team of cooks and bakers who so willingly give of their time and talents to support our events. The afternoon was rounded off in style by Jubilate who entertained us with a range of songs and sent us home in good spirits.

Thank you to everyone who supported the event and contributed in any way. Without all of you these events would not take place. Anyone interested in joining the events team to help plan and manage our yearly programme would be very welcome and should contact Maureen or Zandra.



## CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

# Good News



**SUNDAY FUN CLUB** - Weekly Sun 9:30am  
For primary & preschool-aged children, who come along with parents/carers/grandparents

We thank You, O Lord, for over 1 year of this wonderful group, full of laughter ever Sunday, discussing faith in Jesus in extra creative ways!  
*(Photo: Having fun under the parachute!)*



**HARBOUR TOTS** - Weekly Fri 10-11:30am  
For toddlers (age 0-4), who come along with their parents/carers/grandparents

We thank You, O Lord, for connecting with so many families since we began, and for the regular group of parents/grandparents who we are beginning to make wonderful friendships with.  
*(Photo: Some of our wonderful team!)*



**YOUTH NIGHTS** - Fortnightly Sun 7:30pm  
Open to all young people aged 11-18

We thank You, O Lord, for answered prayer in growing to a good number of teenagers in recent weeks, who we are starting to get to know!  
*(Photo: Pizza making session!)*

### HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

**A - Most critical: PRAY** for God to use these precious connections with children, parents & grandparents to inspire all to come to Jesus for themselves

**B - DONATE** specifically to this work - chat to Susan McNair if interested

**C - VOLUNTEER** as a helper - We're looking for people who will make this a friendly, nurturing, loving environment for all our children and parents/carers/grandparents. For safeguarding, this needs an AccessNI, which we can sort out. Doesn't matter if you haven't got any experience. Get in touch with Elliot to find out more!

## Celebrating Woman in Groomsport Parish Church

One of the many things I like about Groomsport Parish Church is that it has windows celebrating two remarkable women in their own right. If you face the altar, in the transept to your left are windows dedicated to St Elizabeth and to Dorcas. Who were these women?

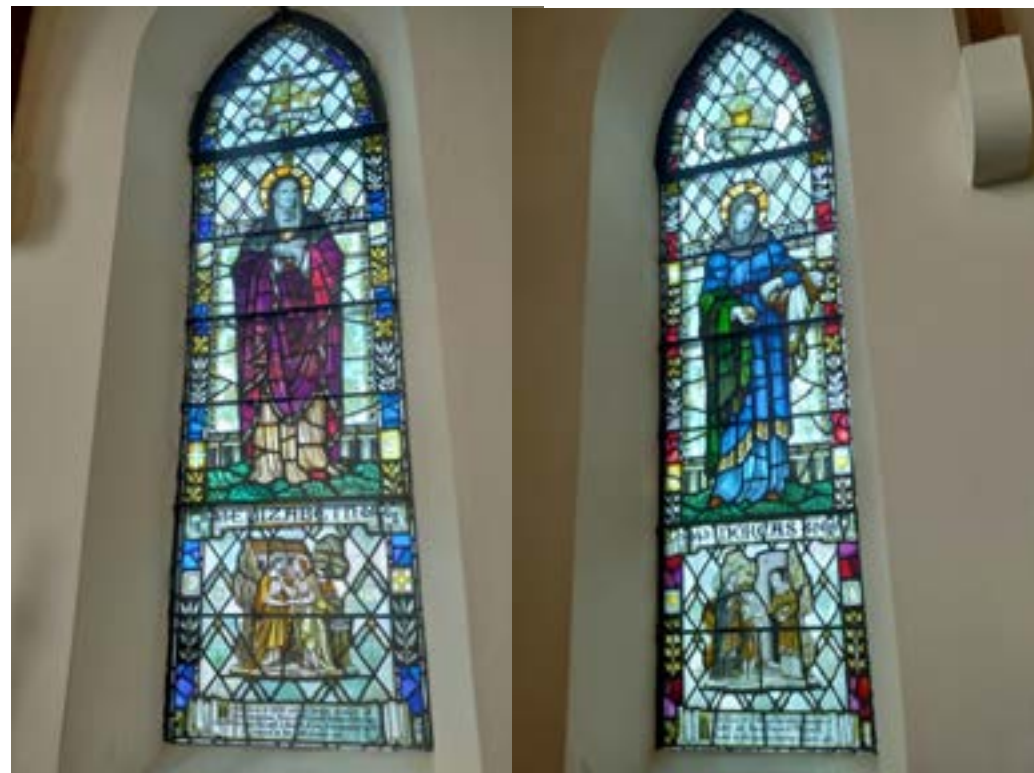
Surprising little is known about Elizabeth. She is only mentioned in the Gospel according to St Luke. She was descended from the house of Aaron, a cousin of the Virgin Mary and married to Zechariah. She was childless and past childbearing age when the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that she would bear a son. They were both sceptical because of Elizabeth's age but she did indeed become pregnant and became the mother of John the Baptist. Apart from the baby leaping in her womb when her cousin Mary came to visit, we know little else. We do know, however, how difficult it can be, even today, for women to face societal pressure when they are unable to bear a child and, in a time when a woman's role was only to be a wife and mother, this must have been magnified. Her fortitude in the face of this may well have been matched by her joy at bearing a son. We do not know if she was alive when her husband was killed in the temple (according to the Apocrypha) or when her son's head was presented to Salome by King Herod.

To me, Elizabeth represents the quiet forbearance manifested by a lot of women when life does not go as they might have wished. She shows acceptance of the many phases that we all face in life – some good, some not so good – and ultimately submission to the will of God. Her unexpected and late pregnancy shows us hope.

Dorcas (in Greek) or Tabitha (in Hebrew) was an early disciple of Jesus and lived in the town of Jappa which is now part of Tel Aviv. Her story is in the Acts of the Apostles. Dorcas was known for her good works and acts of mercy – particularly sewing clothes for the poor. It is thought that she was a widow herself, but not necessarily a poor and powerless widow. When Dorcas died, the local widows were distressed and brought St Peter to the room where they had laid out her body, showing her examples of her sewing. Peter raised Dorcas from the dead.

To me, Dorcas represents all the women who quietly do good in the service of others through love and charity. We are blessed to have so many such women in our Parish. If we were to add up all the hours of organising, cooking, baking, serving etc that the women volunteer to do I am sure it would be phenomenal. I am almost afraid to mention the occasions because I am bound to miss some out, but the amount of caring and welcoming that happens is something for us all to be proud of. Every time I see them at work, I think of Dorcas. Have a good look at the windows when you get a

chance, and be thankful for the work of women in the parish and for their hard work, strength and fortitude. *Marian Cinnamon*



**Mothers' UNION**  
Christian care for families

We are having our AGM meeting on Monday January 20th at 7.30 pm in the parish hall. In this meeting we are hoping to elect a couple of members to the committee. Get your thinking caps on ladies. Elliot will be our speaker.

On Sunday 26th at the 10.30am service the new committee will be introduced along with the enrolment of any new members.

Please speak to Sally if you would like to join the Mothers' Union.

## Kildare Shopping Trip Saturday 23rd November 2024

In all the years I have been organising it, this was probably the most worried I ever was about leading this trip— for two reasons. Firstly, I was over in Scotland on childminding duties until the day before and was so worried my flight home would be cancelled and secondly Storm Bert was due to hit on the day of our trip. However, after being reassured by the coach company and Gregory, our brilliant driver, in a leap of faith I decided to proceed.

The weather getting on the bus outside the Halls at 7.45 am was the worst we had ever experienced, but thankfully the forecast was correct, and as we drove, the weather continued to improve. The 37 ladies and 2 men had a fabulous day after all. Newbridge food was up to its usual standards and while you might have had to look a little harder than in past years, there were still some bargains to be had in Kildare Village.

The £300 made from the trip and the £95 from the raffle on the bus is already being used to source prizes for next years Luxury Draw!! And true to form, one of the prizes in the bus raffle was won by the ever lucky Jenny Craythorne. For anyone interested, I am waiting for a quote from the bus company to book next year's trip!



## Putting up the Christmas Tree

A select group of Santa's  
little helpers



## Christmas Day Service

A lovely picture of everyone who joined us for our Christmas Day Service.





# The Shepherd Boy



When I got to be twelve my father thought that I was old enough to come and help with the sheep overnight. I had been helping him during the day for many years but he didn't take me out at night when I was younger. I was very excited to be treated almost like a grown man and be able to sit with the men as they talked round the fire overnight. It was cold in the winter at night and my mother wrapped me up well and sent me out with a loaf as she remembered my appetite.

When we got to the hill where the sheep were to be penned the sun was just setting and the men gathered sticks and brushwood and let me help them as long as I didn't stray too far; because I was still small for my age they thought I might make a good meal for a hungry wolf. Apart from helping to keep us warm they told me that the fire would frighten off any wild animals that might have wanted to try to get in the pen to catch a lamb.

We have a lot of sheep and it took us some time to gather them all into the

pens where they are kept safe overnight. It was very dark by now but the sky was alive with stars and my eyes kept straying to one very bright star not far from overhead. I had never seen a star in that position before and some of the shepherds said that it was a new star which had recently appeared. Despite the stars I was glad of the fire, the dark all around me made me a bit scared but I didn't want my father or any of the other men to know that, they might not have let me come out again.

Suddenly I had good reason to be scared as the whole sky seemed alight and in front of us appeared an angel.



I was so frightened that I hardly understood what he was saying but I heard something about a baby in a manger, which didn't seem to make much sense. Then suddenly lots of angels appeared and by now I tried to pay attention. They were praising God and saying "peace on earth." The shepherds was very excited and a group of them were going down to where this baby was. I didn't want to miss out on this and as my father was one of those going down

to Bethlehem I just stayed close to him and we were well on our way before anyone noticed me, they were so excited.

When we got to Bethlehem we saw the star again, almost over an inn but really next to the building was a barn where the animals were kept and there seemed to be people in there. I remembered about the manger and said to my father, if there's a manger with a baby in it, it might be in the barn because I knew what a manger was usually used for - and it wasn't babies!

As soon as we went into the barn a very strange feeling came over me and I knew it wasn't just me, as they came in each of the shepherds fell on their knees in front of the manger, I did the same. I am not really interested in babies, that's girls stuff, but this one seemed special, he demanded attention somehow and I was trembling as I looked at him. I will never forget that moment as long as I live. Watching over the baby was his mother, she was very young, she looked as old as my big sister but she was smiling gently and looked very peaceful.

I am an old man now and I know what happened to that baby and I understand why I felt so different about Him. I became a follower of Jesus Christ, perhaps one of His earliest because even before I knew who He was I could not get Him out of my mind. I remained a shepherd all my life but found out all I could about Jesus and felt a connection with Him because He said He was the good Shepherd.

## Luke Chapter 2, verses 8-20

There is of course no specific evidence of a shepherd boy in Luke's gospel account of the birth of Jesus, he only appears in Christmas carols and on cards but the events he describes here are based on on Luke's Christmas story.

*Carol*

## From the Registers

### Holy Rest

**30th October 2024**

*Sam Arnold*

**11th December 2024**

*Jonathan Jones*

**28th December 2024**

*Alec Campbell*

**13th January 2025**

*Desmond Coates*



# starplan

fitted home furniture



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 Phone: 028 9127 0849  
 Whatsapp: +44 7457 4035 49  
 Email: bangor@starplandirect.com

## The Tuesday Club Groomsport

Sponsored by The Spar, Groomsport

We have reached our target of £2,500 for Guide Dogs, and we are now able to name a puppy. Thank you to everybody who donated to our 2024 appeal by attendance at our concert, open days and donations. Without your support we could not achieve our aim – to donate to charity an amount gathered up by our events throughout the year.

Our first meeting of 2025 is on Tuesday 7th January, when the PSNI are visiting us to speak about personal safety and how to avoid scams. This will be an open meeting at 2 pm in the Canon Tyney Hall.

February sees us at the Stables for our annual lunch, when we let down our hair and enjoy friendship and chat with each other. This is well supported by our members.

March will be another open meeting . We have invited Bangor Ukes to entertain us, but more about this nearer the time.

## Gift Aid - A Quick Guide

Ever considered gift aiding your Parish contributions? Perhaps you've avoided the subject entirely. Maybe thought it best not to bother with the Tax Man? Didn't want to change anything or tinker with my tax etc. etc.

It's understandable. But the reality is much simpler and won't disrupt anything. Signing up to Gift Aid doesn't commit you financially - you can continue to give whatever you want. And the requirements to join couldn't be easier. So long as you pay sufficient Income Tax, you just sign a short Declaration confirming this (which the Parish Office can provide), and we will do the rest. From that point, the Parish will be able to claim from the Tax authorities, 25p for every £1 you contribute to the Parish. No fuss, no bother.

So please, if you haven't already, give Gift Aid some thought. Susan our Treasurer will be happy to answer any questions.



# ELITE SWEEPS NI

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TO THE HIGHEST STANDARD**



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*Family run business that offers a  
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**Christmas  
Present Appeal**

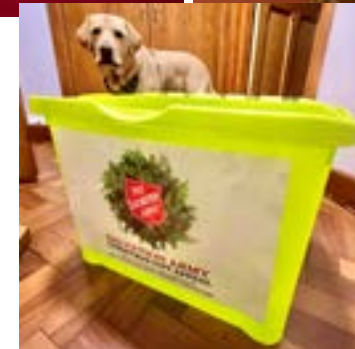


Happy New Year and thank you to all who generously donated to the Salvation Army Christmas appeal. Over 100 toys were collected and will have been distributed to families in need. We know that the reliance on these services was huge this year so your support is so appreciated! This is a cause very close to my heart so it was lovely to be able to get involved in it alongside you all and see the presents pile up each week.

A special thanks to Shaun Townsley who, along with Elliot delivered the toys to Bangor Citadel at the beginning of December.

Best wishes,

Nomi





Where do we go with our **burning questions?**

*A place to openly explore the "big questions" -*

**What does it mean to find real hope?**

**What happens after this life on earth?**

**What does it mean to believe in Jesus?**



Come, bring any and all your questions to our Alpha Course - relaxed evenings to explore faith in Jesus with videos & informal table discussions.

This is for **everyone**, especially those who don't believe in Jesus or go to church but are interested in exploring more...

**No question is off limits!**

**Wednesday evenings at 7pm**

Taster first session: **Weds 19 Feb 2025, 7pm**

Then **weekly** on Weds for 7 weeks after that... don't worry if you can't make every week!

**Location:** Maxwell Hall, Groomsport, BT19 6JR

No need to book & it is completely free. Bring a friend too! Any questions? Just ask Elliot our minister at - [elliottgroomsport@gmail.com](mailto:elliottgroomsport@gmail.com)

## Walking for Softies

After a break over the summer we started our new season of walks in September at the old abbey in Greyabbey. It was a beautiful sunny morning and we all appreciated the peace and stillness surrounding the abbey. It was so calming just wandering around the ancient buildings and soaking up the atmosphere, imagining what it must have been like to live there all those years ago. After this peaceful morning we drove to Harrison's restaurant and had delicious scones and coffee, some even had breakfast!

October found us walking along the Lagan Towpath near Shaw's Bridge. For me, the highlight of this walk was when Carol spotted a kingfisher. Quite a number of us were fortunate enough to see it when she pointed it out to us. After enjoying the beauty of the trees changing colour, we stopped at the Lock Keepers Inn for our obligatory coffee and scones!

Anyone who wishes to join us will be made very welcome. If you have no transport, please ask us a few days beforehand and we will do our best to accommodate you.

For further information, please speak to Ian on 07968401387 or Zandra on 07968401386



## Book Reviews for Autumn by Carol

### Book reviews for winter.

Over sixteen years ago, when I was on the select vestry, I suggested that a book stall, such as they have in the Walter Nelson Hall, would be a good addition to our hall. The idea was bounced right back to me with the suggestion that I get on with it! I did and I have enjoyed being responsible for it and talking to you all about books you enjoy. In the early weeks of 2008 our bookshelves opened. Since then they have provided reading material for many of you and along the way made almost £4,000.00 for both CMS and our church. Thinking ahead now I would like to think that there will be those who would be prepared to carry on the book stall when I am no longer able to. In the meantime is there anyone who would be interested in helping me with the bookstall? It is not an onerous responsibility and indeed if you enjoy reading it is a pleasurable task. The only really busy time is the occasional book fair. Please contact me on 078402249609 if you would be interested.

### A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles.



I can hardly praise this novel highly enough although initially I was very unsure that I would enjoy it. Set in Moscow in a five star hotel in the first half of the twentieth century, the main protagonist is the

fictional Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov. His surroundings and the events that occur around him in Moscow are all based on the history of the time. At the age of eleven he and his sister are made orphans when their parents die of cholera and his godfather Grand Duke Demidov counsels him to be strong for his sister Helena, because "...adversity presents itself in many forms, and if a man does not master his circumstances, then he is bound to be mastered by them." The count takes notice of this advice as we see when, after the Bolshevik revolution, he is arrested as a 'social parasite' but, as a result of a revolutionary poem believed to have been written by him, he is not put before a firing squad, instead he is sentenced to house arrest in his current home, the Hotel Metropol.

He is escorted back to the hotel by a military guard and ordered to leave his luxurious suite and taken instead to the servants quarters at the top of the hotel where he is left in a tiny cramped room with what he can cram of his furniture, some of which has been retrieved from his old life. The way in which he adapts to these reduced circumstances and the relationships that he builds with residents, staff, customers and many visitors, including an actress, an orchestral conductor, an architect and an aide-de-camp of an American general, form the basis of the novel. He is a wonderful conversationalist and something of a polymath so the reader feels that they would enjoy an afternoon in his company.

The structure of the book is fascinating. It is in doubling chronological order from the day after his trial to two, then five, then ten days, up to sixteen years in the chapters, at which stage the progress is reversed until the end of the book. In addition to that discipline the title of every chapter begins with the letter 'A'.

This is a long book but I feel sure that anyone who tackles it will thoroughly enjoy it.

### Little Faith by Nickolas Butler

This is an unusual and haunting book. Set



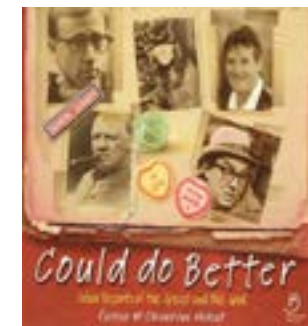
over the course of a year in rural Wisconsin, it is the story of Lyle and his wife Peg. He is in his sixties, retired from his original work but very active helping a friend manage his orchards. Having lost a son at the

age of nine months he and Peg have long struggled with grief, particularly as it proved impossible for further children to arrive. They adopt a daughter from whom sadly they become estranged. When she returns with her own son joy returns to their life and they almost inevitably become deeply attached to the little boy, Isaac.

This new found joy is relatively short lived however as it becomes apparent that whilst living away from her parents, their daughter Shiloh has become involved with an fundamental church and its

devout pastor, Steven. Steven is convinced that five year old Isaac is a healer, with the power to lay hands on the sick and cure them. Lyle reflects on his own faith or lack of it whilst wrestling with the conflict between keeping his grandson and daughter close but deep unease about their church. All this is set amongst a beautiful depiction of the changing seasons. The quality of the writing is superb. Lyle also has a very close friend Hoot, who he often visits with Isaac and when Hoot tells him he has a diagnosis of terminal cancer Lyle's anxieties multiply as well as his thoughts about his own faith. This may sound too sad to read but the quality of the writing, the appeal of the flawed but deeply likeable characters who inhabit the book, the beautiful depiction of the relationship between Lyle and his wife Peg for me redeem it utterly. A simply beautiful book, it doesn't answer any questions, nor challenge the faith of the reader but it certainly makes you think, which for me is what a good book should do.

### Could do Better. School reports of the Great and the Good. Edited by Catherine Hurley



This is a diverting and amusing little book, great for a ten minute browse over a cup of coffee. Like many things, as the introduction reveals,

## Book Reviews continued..

reports such as are quoted in this book are now a thing of the past. School reports are standardised and set phrases provided for every circumstance. Gone are the days, some would say thankfully, when it could be said "This boy will never get anywhere in life" as his headmaster said of Eric Morecambe. And of Winston Churchill, "Is a constant trouble to everybody and is always in some scrape or other. He cannot be trusted to behave himself anywhere".

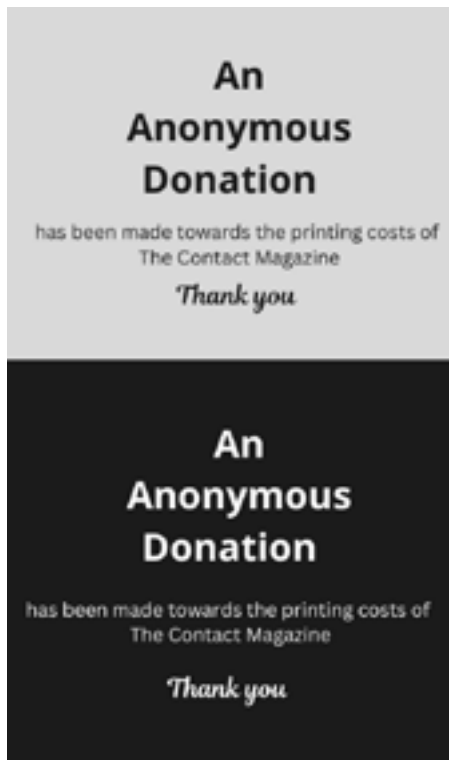
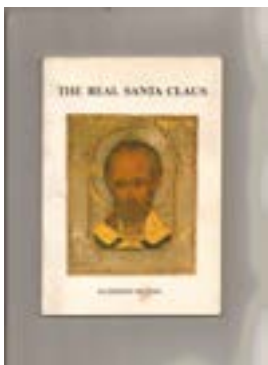
### The Real Santa Claus by Catherine Beaton

The Real Santa Claus by Katherine Beaton. For parents and grandparents at this time of the year with children at an age to wonder just how 'real' Father Christmas

is, this is a perfect little book. It tells the story of Nikolaos born seventeen centuries ago in a remote part of the then Roman Empire. His parents were among the early Christians in Lycia in what is now Turkey. This carefully researched little book tells of his strict Christian upbringing and his gradual elevation to be bishop of Myra. If you were to read this book you can authoritatively tell children of his past in simpler terms. You may prefer of course

not to explain the origins of the small sacks of gold (chocolate) coins that appear at this time of the year and clearly refer to a well documented action of St Nicholas. The book goes on to explain how the legend grew after his death. To this day he is venerated in many Christian traditions as well as celebrated around the world in a rather more secular fashion.

The bookshelves have been well visited recently which has enabled me to put in many books that are new to the shelves so do keep looking. As the days shorten you will have more time to read. *Carol*



## The Quiz

What a great time we had at our quiz! Around 85 people came and we needed more tables and chairs... and it was very competitive!

Thanks so much to Zandra & Ian for excellent questions and to Wesley for being our quizmaster - and to everyone who came and so very generously supported us too. Most of all thanks to all who prayed for this evening too! Lots of answered prayer as we praise God who brings communities together like this with such joy.



# Autumn Sale and Luxury Draw

Praise God for a truly wonderful morning we had at the Sale & Luxury Draw today, with an excellent team, including loads of creativity - what a gift it is to have all these amazing people join with us!



## Luxury Draw Winners

- 1) Ted Baker rucksack - Ashley Rogan
- 2) Men's Fat Face outdoor jacket - John Mckee
- 3) Voyage Hand Luggage - Gordon Boyd
- 4) Ladies' Jack Wills hoody - Pauline Harrison
- 5) Carl Scarpa Ladies' handbag - Pauline Harrison
- 6) Men's Crew Lambswool Sweater - Ian Walters
- 7) 4 Aynsley mugs with matching plates - Ivan Mellon
- 8) Pair of Bedeck luxury pillows - Robert Montgomery
- 9) Jewellery box with necklace, bracelet and Newbridge silver bangle - Marian Cinammond
- 10) Tropic skincare hamper - Mark Kirwan
- 11) Men's Haworth shirt - Bobby Kelly
- 12) Rose Rosie and her dog - Jenny Craythorne

## Trains, Boats and Planes – As well as Tuk Tuks

When we booked our holiday to Vietnam and Cambodia, we did not really know what to expect. Two things prompted us – this was going to be fully escorted small group tour, organised by a local travel company. Whilst we had known Alan, our operator, for many years, we had never undertaken an escorted tour with him. Secondly, our friends Don and Rosie were going. Don, a journalist with the BBC was the last UK reporter to leave Vietnam when the American forces withdrew in 1975 as the war ended.

Our first experience of Hanoi was the crazy pace of life with motorcycle scooters weaving in and out on the streets like swarms of insects. We were told that when crossing the road on foot, walk steadily, do not hesitate and they will weave their way round you. Our ride on a Tuk Tuk pulled by a scooter on the busy street was somewhat nerve-wrecking – but these locals know just how to navigate the streets. The smells, and the colours of this bustling city were amazing. Several hours walking around the exquisitely manicured Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum complex in a large pedestrian zone was most interesting, and with all the pomp and ceremony from officials that one would expect.



An overnight cruise on Halong Bay - a UNESCO World Heritage site followed. We sailed on a traditional wooden boat (each cabin had its own full-sized zucchini bath and bidet) amongst stunning landscapes of limestone karsts and took small rowing boats into caves. On return to Hanoi, we experienced one of the anticipated highlights for Walter, the overnight train journey from Hanoi to Hue (no luxury on the train). I suggest you look up 'Train Street' in Hanoi' on Utube for an unbelievable visual experience. I had taken disposable toilet seat covers and several other

measures to keep ourselves free from infection). It was quite an experience and by this time the group of twenty-one on the trip were bonding well. Hoi-an was one of the most beautiful smaller cities on this trip, cut through with canals. A combination of beautifully preserved architecture and lantern-lit evenings created a wonderful atmosphere in which to shop, explore the iconic Japanese Covered Bridge, to have a suit tailored, or simply to eat and drink. Being somewhat challenged by some of the Vietnamese cuisine, Walter had a wonderful steak overlooking the lantern lit street.

In Hoi-an, we were mesmerised by the Bay Mau Coconut Forest and the Basket Boat Tour. After donning our coolie hats, we cruised through a diverse forest of flora and fauna, where we witnessed the coconut boat dance on the river and even had a go at Vietnamese fishing when we tried to catch crabs.



Both Vietnam and Cambodia have a very complex and brutal history. In Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) we explored the Cu Chi Tunnels. These are a vast underground system dug during the Vietnam War by the Viet Cong soldiers as a way of saving lives and provided an ability to move undetected and launch surprise attacks, in an effort to defeat the US soldiers. They cover some 200km and some of the more agile amongst us took the opportunity of crawling through one of them.

Our local Vietnamese guide describes the country as having a very 'flexible communism', in other words, market forces are allowed to operate. However, I have never seen as daunting and glamorous a city-centre as Hoichiminh. The stunning hotels, apartment blocks with their own heli-pads and the top designer shops, were in sharp contrast to what we saw in some of the more rural and poverty-stricken areas.

On a happier note, cruising up the Mekong Delta amongst the mangroves was a highlight for me. Just two couples on a little sampan with no crowds nearby was a



spine chilling and memorable experience of what life has been for many of the people in this area for centuries.

After eleven days in Vietnam, we took a short flight to Cambodia where we would spend four days. The most memorable attraction there was the amazing Angkor Temple complex. This is the crown jewel of Cambodia, a vast maze of temples stretching over four-hundred square kilometres. The ruins date back to the 12th century and based initially on Hindu traditions. The monuments are imbued with symbolic significance demonstrating a high level of social order during these ancient times. We could hardly take in the religious, the artistic and the archeological significance of this great site.



A salutary reminder of the genocide and the cruelty imposed by man to his fellow man, was a visit to Wat Thmei, an area that served as one of the Killing Fields during the Khymer Rouge regime. The Khymer Rouge was a guerilla communist group which dispensed with twenty-five per cent of the population of Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. We were both deeply moved by some of the images depicting the destruction of so many innocent people.

Cambodia seems to operate on a more gentle level than Vietnam, motor cars on the streets as opposed to the frenetic scooters. However, the land seems poorer. The paddy fields were maintained by manual labour – no big plant or machinery. Tourism is the main industry. We enjoyed the food there and the people were very warm and friendly.

This only represents as small dip into our trip, which was the most amazing experience. We split the flight home by spending four days in Doha which gave us the opportunity to chill out, sit by a pool and enjoy some relaxing sunshine. Then it was 'home for Christmas'.

*Mae Burke*

# Wednesday in the Word

**Bible study - 3-4pm Wednesdays**

*Exploring Jesus in the Gospel of John together*



**Location: Maxwell Hall, Wednesdays weekly 3-4pm**

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



## Prayer for Revival

**NEW TIME FROM FEBRUARY:**

**2:30PM WEDNESDAYS**

**(IN MAXWELL HALL JUST BEFORE BIBLE STUDY)**

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.

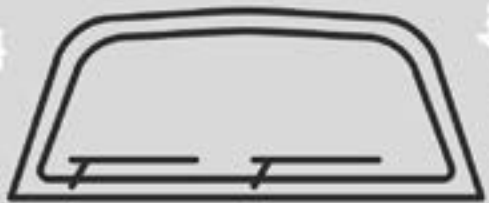
**(1)** First, we light candles reading promises from Scripture for revival (e.g. Isaiah 44)

**(2)** Second, we reflect through listening to a piece of music

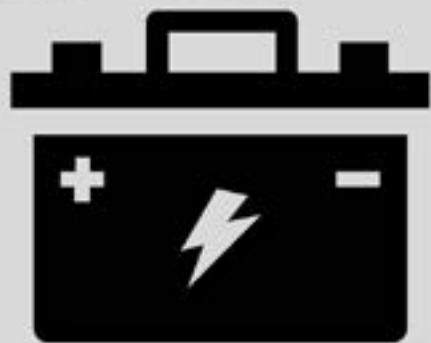
**(3)** Third, we have a time of open prayer, for people to pray either silently or to share a prayer out loud (no pressure either way), however they feel led.

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





Wiper blades supplied and fitted



Batteries supplied and fitted



66 Balloo Road, Bangor

028 9146 0004

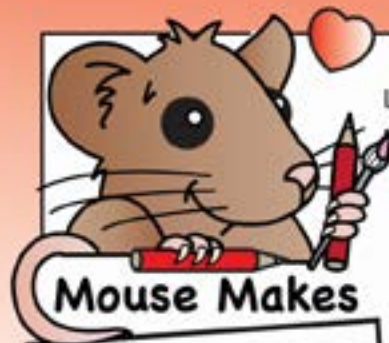
Windscreens - Motor factors - Service Centre



Oil, coolant and screen wash top ups



Car servicing and maintenance



### Mouse Makes

"Love is  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 love is \_\_\_\_\_  
 it does not, \_\_\_\_\_  
 it does not \_\_\_\_\_  
 it is not \_\_\_\_\_  
 it does not \_\_\_\_\_  
 others, it is not self - \_\_\_\_\_  
 it is not easily \_\_\_\_\_  
 it keeps no record of \_\_\_\_\_  
 Love delights in \_\_\_\_\_  
 it always \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

The steadfast **love** of the Lord never \_\_\_\_\_  
 His \_\_\_\_\_  
 never come to an end;  
 they are new every \_\_\_\_\_  
*Lamentations 3:20-23*

*I pray... you will understand...  
 the greatness of Christ's love,*

how \_\_\_\_\_  
 and how \_\_\_\_\_  
 and how \_\_\_\_\_  
 that **love** is.  
*Ephesians 3:18-19*

God is **love**.  
 whoever \_\_\_\_\_  
 in **love** \_\_\_\_\_  
 in God, and God \_\_\_\_\_  
 in them.  
*1 John 4:16*

Give \_\_\_\_\_  
 to the Lord, for He is \_\_\_\_\_  
 his steadfast **love**  
 endures \_\_\_\_\_  
*Psalms 136:1*

### HOW DOES GOD LOVE ME?

**God sent me a saviour:**  
 He sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him.  
*1 John 4:9*

**God gave me His spirit:**  
 He has given you the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His **love**.  
*Romans 5:5*

**God called me His child:**  
 See what great **love** the Father has for us that He would call us His children.  
*1 John 1:3*

### DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus told us to:  
**LOVE** the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and with all your mind.  
*Matthew 22:37*  
**LOVE** your neighbour the same as you love yourself.  
*Matthew 22:39*

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

GOD • **LOVE**  
 PATIENT • KIND  
 GRACIOUS • PEACE  
 JUST • TRUTHFUL  
 TRUSTING • LOYAL  
 HOPEFUL  
 PERSEVERES  
 ENDURES  
 HUMBLE  
 SELFLESS  
 PROTECTS • DEFENDS

# Allergens and Intolerances

Under current regulations we are required to register with the Environmental Health Team at Ards and North Down Borough Council if we want to continue to provide food in the church halls. We have now done so. This has had a number of consequences for us, including having a hygiene inspection of our kitchen. As you may have seen from the certificate on the hall doors we received a top 5 star rating which was fantastic. A number of us also attended a training session on food hygiene run by the Council which was very helpful.

There has been a lot of publicity about food allergens and intolerances in recent times. For those of us lucky enough not to suffer from allergies the stories in the press tend to have little longterm impact. However for those who need to be very aware of the ingredients in the food they eat, this is an important issue. We are therefore now required to identify allergens in the food which we supply so that anyone concerned can decide whether or not the food is suitable for them.

At the outset this seems daunting, not least because there are 14 different allergens to be accounted for. We have been discussing how we might deal with this issue and hopefully not alarm any of you who so kindly make sandwiches, bake or provide food of any sort for us. Hopefully the following guidelines provide a sensible approach.

- We will display a poster in the halls asking anyone concerned about allergens or intolerances to ask about the ingredients of the food on offer. It is their responsibility to do so.
- We will not use nuts in any of our cooking or baking.
- One of the key times we provide food is after church on the first Sunday of the month. This is fairly easy to deal with as you will be on hand to answer any questions about the ingredients. If you buy the food the allergens will be displayed in bold on the back of the package, so please make sure you bring the packaging with you. If you bake you can bring your recipe with you and let anyone asking know the ingredients used.
- For events where you may simply bake and leave it in the kitchen and are not available to answer questions this is a bit more difficult. On these occasions we have decided that the best approach is to standardise food as much as possible. We can do this as follows:

When you agree to provide sandwiches, which we hope you will continue to do, we will ask you to use specific ingredients so that we can identify and record the allergens

for you. These allergen charts will be kept in a file in the kitchen for easy reference.

We will also supply allergen charts for the soups and scones which are made for Pauline's Soup mornings so that if you are helping you can look them up if asked. Again these will be kept in a folder in the kitchen for easy reference.

Many of you bake for us, which is much appreciated. In these circumstances it is harder to provide pre prepared allergen charts so we would simply ask you to leave your recipe with us indicating the make of the ingredients used eg Mcdougalls Flour or Tesco Sultanas, when you deliver your items. Over time we may be able to standardise some of the bakery items. In the meantime we will add your item to an allergen chart for you.

For those aware of allergens and are happy to identify them yourselves we can offer you allergen labels for this purpose.

When we run a cake sale and parcel items together we will use your recipes to complete allergen stickers for each parcel

We hope that these guidelines are not too onerous to follow and will not put you off providing the wonderful range of food which we are well known for.

We will be there to help you with this, particularly as we settle into this new way of working. If you need help please feel free to contact

Maureen on 07843679714

Jenny on 07748580541

Zandra on 07968401386



# Clubs, Activities and Midweek Services

## Monday

Every week	<b>Groomsport Art Club</b>	1:30 pm	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
First Monday in the month	<b>Select Vestry meeting</b>	7:30 pm	Contact Heather 07834 771075
Third Monday in the month	<b>Mothers' Union</b>	7:30 pm	Contact Sally 07939 448402

## Tuesday

First Tuesday in the month	<b>The Tuesday Club</b>	2 pm	Contact Mary 07359 373770
Second Tuesday in the month	<b>Sing for Fun</b>	2 pm	Contact Mary 07359 373770 or Pauline 07745 191808
Every Tuesday	<b>Compline</b>	7 pm (in church)	Contact Elliot 07957 724965

## Wednesday

Every Wednesday	<b>Mojo Club</b>	9:30 am	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Every Wednesday	<b>Prayer for Revival</b>	11 am (in church)	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
Every Wednesday	<b>Scrabble Club</b>	2 pm	Contact Elaine 07791 569432
Every Wednesday	<b>Wednesday in the Word - Bible Study</b>	3 pm	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
Every Wednesday	<b>Silver Spurs Line Dancing Club</b>	8 pm	Contact Gillian 07968 225619

# Clubs, Activities and Midweek Services

## Thursday

Every Thursday	<b>Holy Communion</b>	11 am (in Church)	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
First and Third Thursday in the month	<b>Soup and Scones</b>	11 am	Contact Pauline 07745 191808
Every Thursday	<b>Jubilate Singers</b>	2 pm (in Church)	Contact Maurice 07752 569999
Every Thursday	<b>Chess Club</b>	7:30 pm	Contact Brendan 07871 037506

## Friday

Every Friday	<b>Harbour Tots</b>	10 am	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
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## Saturday

Last Saturday in the month	<b>Walking for Softies</b>	10 am	Contact Ian 07968 401387 for details of location
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## Sunday

Every Sunday	<b>Sunday Fun Club</b>	9:30 am	Contact Elliot 07957 724965
Fortnightly	<b>Winter Youth Nights</b>	Contact Elliot	Contact Elliot 07957 724965



# Come join us to worship God together!

## Sunday 19 January

**LORD'S PRAYER SERIES** (continued)  
*"Hallowed be Thy Name"*

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

## Sunday 26 January

*"Thy Kingdom Come"*

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

## Sunday 2 February

**CANDLEMAS**

8:30am	Holy Communion
10:30am	Service of the Word <i>(with candle-lighting)</i>
6:00pm	Taize Evening Prayer

*Coffee in church hall after 10:30am*

## Sunday 9 February

*"Thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven"*

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

## Sunday 16 February

*"Give us this day our daily bread"*

8:30am	Holy Communion
10:30am	Service of the Word <i>(Roger Thompson from CMS Nepal preaching)</i>
6:00pm	Taize Evening Prayer

Sunday Fun Club - 9:30am weekly (for children plus parents / grandparents)  
Youth Nights - Fortnightly Sun 7:30pm  
Praise Nights - Sun 7:30, as announced

## Sunday 23 February

*"Forgive us... as we forgive..."*

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

## Sunday 2 March

*"Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil"*

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

*Coffee in church hall after 10:30am*

## Sunday 9 March

**LENT SERIES: Fight the Good Fight**  
*Lent Week 1: Live not by bread alone*

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

## Sunday 16 March

*Lent Week 2: Putting God to the test*

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

## Sunday 23 March

*Lent Week 3: Worship God only*

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

**MIDWEEK:** Tues 7pm - Compline  
1st Weds of month - 10:30am Holy Communion *(at Mount Stewart Chapel)*  
Weds 2:30 - Prayer for Revival *(halls)*  
Weds 3:00 - Bible Study of John *(halls)*  
Thurs 11am - Holy Communion  
Fri 10am - Harbour Tots *(halls)*