

CHRISTMAS 2020

SAINTS *Alive!*

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THE MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS' PARISH, ANTRIM

CHRISTMAS IS IN THE AIR

As I have been chatting to parishioners this week on the phone, I've interrupted a few people putting up their Christmas decorations. The trees are coming out and the lights are being tested. Baubles are being unpacked and Singing Santas are getting dusted off and the batteries replaced. It is a very special time of the year and perhaps even more so this year when brightening up our homes will offer a welcome change of scenery!

There is no doubt that 2020 has been a year that many will be glad to see the back of. It has proven very challenging for many who have been struggling with their own health and maybe even dealing with the loss of loved ones. With extra stress at work caused by the strangest of conditions or perhaps we have even lost our job, with not being able to enjoy our sports and social lives, so many of our plans for 2020 have been put on hold until this current pandemic passes.

Praise God that there are rays of light that offer the promise that next year might see life returning to (a new) normal. The news of various vaccines being readily available in 2021 is something that we can all celebrate. We are blessed to live in a country where our social services can help us survive until the economy recovers.

Even so, there are many four letter words that we would not want to put on the front of our church magazine that could describe 2020. Words such as we might say when if we miss that nail that attaches the fairy lights to the tree in the front garden and whack our thumb. There is however a four-letter word that we all need to hear today - one that every Christmas carol sings for us.

Hope.

Every decoration, carol, Brussel Sprout (my favourite!), snoring relative and movie rerun reminds us that this special time of year can be approached with joy and expectation and **HOPE**. We are reminded that people like us and our families matter a great deal to God. Just look at the people involved in the Christmas story.

Mary reminds us of the hope that every young person can be a part of changing the world.

Joseph teaches us to trust God even when things are beyond our understanding.

The Shepherds show us that we can experience the glory of heaven in the ordinariness of a starry night.

The Magi show us that leaving safety behind to meet the King can be a wonderful adventure.

The Innkeeper shows us that the smallest of offerings - space in an outhouse - can mean the world to people who need our help.

You and me. Hoping that we can have loved ones around. Gathering up presents when the shops are open. Spending too much on Amazon. Eating even more snacks. Praying that Christmas can still be special because it would just be great to finish 2020 on high note.

Listen carefully then. Angels are raising song from the tops of fir trees. Hear the rustle of tinsel being unpacked. The sound of thumbs being whacked and fuses being changed. Our Lord is coming and hope is stirring. May the coming of our Lord this Christmas be a time of joy, blessing and hope for you and all whom you love.

Yours in Christ
Peter



THE EXTRA MILE BUCKET

The green Extra Mile Bucket at the Churchwardens' table has replaced the glass bottle in which many parishioners deposited their loose change and has been the fund raising focus for four projects. The generosity of the parishioners has been incredible. The Rev Peter in one of his excellent sermons said, 'What we share is more important than what we own. If we hoard things for ourselves, we cannot be good neighbours.' It is evident through these projects that our parishioners care for their brothers and sisters in Christ whether they are at home or abroad.



PROJECT 1
£400 helping to fund the Rev Aaron McAlister and Noreen Hurst visit to our link parish in Zambia

PROJECT 2
£330 for hand held crosses providing spiritual comfort for patients in the Macmillan Unit

PROJECT 3
£1000 for 5 wheel chairs for Girassol

The present project has really caught the imagination of our parishioners as we have raised **£1,700 and counting** supplying upwards of sixty!!! £30 water filters that will provide a family with clean water for up to seven years. The project is run by kids4school and the filters are being distributed to families in Tanzania.



PARISH FINANCES

We are so grateful to the number of parishioners who have made use of the online banking facility. If you want to deliver your Free Will Offering and Fabric Fund envelopes to be recorded in your 2020 donations, **the Parish Centre will be open on Sunday 20 December from 2.00pm-4.00pm.**

To use electronic banking

The Bank Account name is: **Antrim Parish Church**

The Sort Code is: **98 01 80**

The Account Number is: **01052013**

In the reference section please write 'FWO' for Free Will Offering, your envelope number and surname. For example **FWO123Smith**. Use 'FF' for Fabric Fund, e.g. **FF123Smith**.

If you are unable to pay online you could use these details and make a lodgement at the Bank. Failing all of these, if you give the Vicar a call on 028 9446 2186, he can collect your envelopes or leave them through the letter box at the vicarage.

Many thanks for your generosity.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Festival of Lessons and Carols

Sunday 20 December 10.00am
Sunday 20 December 12 noon
Wednesday 23 December 11.00am

As there are restricted numbers for each service, please sign up for only **one** of the Christmas Eve or Christmas Day services by giving your name to the Stewards on Sunday 13 or 20 December.

Christmas Eve Holy Communion

Thursday 24 December 8.00pm
Thursday 24 December 10.00pm

Christmas Day Holy Communion

Friday 25 December 9.00am

Christmas Day - Funday Families

Friday 25 December 11.00am
We will be premiering our Virtual Nativity at this service and you can watch in on the web camera.

Readings and Carols for Christmas

Sunday 27 December 11.00am

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON...

Although of our regular activities have been curtailed due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we have been doing our best to maintain as much normality as possible. It has been encouraging to hear how parishioners are supporting one another through regular phonecalls. It is important to try and stay in touch and stay connected.

Worship - During a 'normal/regular' week would expect about 20 people at 8.30am Holy Communion , 140 at Morning Service and 25 at Evening service in addition to 15 at our Wednesday Holy Communion service. This makes for a total of 200 worshippers. During our restricted services we have been averaging 140 worshippers which is very pleasing. Thankfully with our streaming facility, we are able to still connect with those who are at home who can watch and join in safely on line.

Our younger families have been joining together each Sunday in the parish centre at 11.00am in two groups for Funday Family Worship. Juice and Haribos are served to our young worshipper and parents have tea and coffee on arrival. Along with our popular action worship songs, craft activities and quizzes we have been exploring the lives of Bible heroes such as Noah, Abraham and Joseph.

For five Monday evenings, we have had our **zoom study group**. It has been so encouraging being able to use this marvellous facility to be able to connect with one another and share and study our thoughts on the promises of Advent.



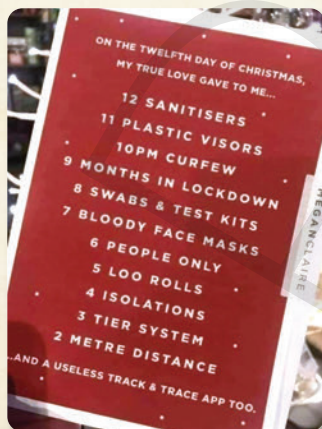
We pray for and look forward to the day when we can get back to doing all the things we love and appreciate through our membership of All Saints.

There will be no Nativity Play this year because

- The Three Wise Men face a **travel ban**
- The Shepherds have been **furloughed**
- The Inn Keeper has shut the hotel under **tier three regulations** and had a slump in bookings
- Santa won't be working as he would break the **rule of 6** with Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Donner and Blitzen.
- As for Rudolph, with that red nose, he should be **isolating** and **taking a test**.

THE SHOW WILL GO ON!

We will be broadcasting a **Virtual Nativity** live from All Saints' on Christmas Morning from 11.00am through churchmedia.tv - see back page for details on how to tune in!



ONLINE SERVICES

The upgraded sound system and camera have been invaluable during the last year. They have helped us all to stay connected even when it has not been possible to join together for our normal Sunday worship. There is a variety of ways that you can watch our services online.

The Direct Link

<https://www.churchmedia.tv/camera/all-saints-church-of-ireland>
or <https://tinyurl.com/yyfqbfh3>

Our Own Website

Go to the All Saints' Website <http://antrim.connor.anglican.org/>

Facebook

Go to our All Saints' Antrim Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsparishantrim/> and click the blue "Watch Video" button. If you are unable to watch any of the services at the time of broadcast, then recordings of the services appear on the same webpage as the live video if you scroll down the page.



Scan Me



THANKS BT!

We have received such an amazing service from BT regarding the broadband upgrade that we just wanted to mention them in this Christmas magazine.

First, thanks to the CEO of BT Philip Jansen who took the time to forward our email on to someone who could help. Secondly thanks to Paul Gilligan of Executive Complaints who dealt with us so professionally and courteously. Thirdly our appreciation goes out to Angela Doherty in the Belfast office who helped to get our admin sorted. Cynthia has also been trying to get the various accounts tidied up and got a great deal of help from Mr Muir on the helpline.

Thanks BT! You have been amazing. A prayer especially for you this Christmas!

Almighty Father, we bring to you the large companies that keep the infrastructure of our country running, huge organisations where it is so easy to forget that each customer is a person and not an account number.

We thank you for the wonderful service that we have received from BT in providing our new fibre broadband line and ask that you bless all those whose efforts makes it possible for us to stream services all over the world.

We ask that they know your love and blessing this Christmas and that you would keep all in essential services safe during these difficult times; through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.



Amen

WHO'S WHO

Vicar: The Venerable Dr Stephen McBride

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Hon Treasurer: Mrs Cynthia Cherry MBE

Tel: 07703 547 647

Parish Recorder: Mr Brian Neill

Tel: (028) 9446 3708

Sexton & Caretaker: Mr Cecil Barton

Tel: (028) 9446 5770

The Clergy will be grateful for any notification of serious illness in the Parish and for information regarding the admission and discharge of parishioners from hospitals outside Antrim