

CHRISTMAS 2024

SAINTS *Alive!*

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THE MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS' PARISH, ANTRIM

THE WONDER OF HIS LOVE

I enjoy watching some of the made for television Christmas movies which appear on a certain channel every afternoon from November. The great American architect Frank Lloyd Wright of the mid-twentieth century once cynically described television as 'chewing gum for the eyes' and these formulaic movies fall into that category. They are easy to watch and are based on the theme boy meets girl or girl meets boy. They eventually begin to notice each other, there is the possibility of romance and then with 20 minutes to go before the end of the movie, the potential wedding bells are silenced only for the romance to be salvaged. Boy then kisses girl and everyone lives happily ever after.

The films usually begin with an ariel shot of an idyllic midwest American town lightly dusted with snow. Everyone is dressed in red or green or red and green tartan and everyone is busily working to have the best Christmas ever. Sometimes the film may even be centered around a church BUT, Jesus is never mentioned. Yes there may be an occasional carol in the background, however the central message, the reason for the season, is sadly absent. Huge efforts are made to have the best mince pies, or Christmas jumper, or best decorated tree but no mention of Jesus. It is a bit like having all the trappings - sprouts, stuffing, crackers and cranberry sauce, but no turkey.

We cannot overstate the ordinariness of the first Christmas and those who gathered around the manger in Bethlehem. Mary was no-one special. She was a young ordinary girl from a poor family who was engaged or betrothed to a carpenter BUT when she was visited by the angel

Gabriel with the message, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you,' although she was greatly troubled, she said yes. 'I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.' The ordinariness of the first Christmas is further emphasised in that Mary's home town Nazareth is never mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures before we learn of Mary. The shepherds who were encouraged by the angels to leave their flocks on a hillside and 'go and see this thing that has come to pass,' were of such lowly status in the religious world. Yet they said yes and were the first to witness the miracle of the Messiah's birth. God our Father wants us, his ordinary children to know more of his love.

The story is told that when Queen Victoria first experienced electric light, she was so amazed that she had a servant to stand by the switch turning it on and off to demonstrate the new reality of instant illumination. Where there was darkness, now there was light. This is what happened on the first Christmas. The true light that gives light to everyone came into the world. Sadly, he came to his own people, but they did not receive him. Thankfully the gift of Jesus and the life he gives was opened to all the world not just the children of Israel. The light of his love still shines into the dark places of our lives.

This Christmas, may we discover once more, the power of that light and that love. May we not get so anxious about presents and festive food and find room in our heart to come and worship him and discover the wonder of his love.

CHRISTMAS SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sunday 15 December

11.30 am Family Service Carols for Christmas
(in All Saint's Parish Church)

We look forward to welcoming our youth organisation members and their families.

Sunday 22 December

11.30 am Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

6.30 pm Festival of Nine Lessons
and Carols by Candlelight

Tuesday 24 December

CHRISTMAS EVE

10.00 pm First Holy Communion of Christmas

Wednesday 25 December

CHRISTMAS DAY

8.30 am Holy Communion

10.30 am Family Christmas Service and
Funday Club Nativity

Sunday 29 December

8.30 am Holy Communion

11.30 am Songs of Praise celebration
with Carols for Christmas

FUNDAY CLUB HOLIDAYS

There will be no Funday Club on
22 & 29 December and **5 January**

Funday Club will resume on **12 January 2025**

FREEWILL OFFERING ENVELOPES

The Hon. Treasurer wishes to close the books for the year ending December 2024 on **Sunday 29 December 2024**. It would be greatly appreciated if you could have all outstanding FWO envelopes for 2024 in by this date if you wish your contributions to be recorded in the 2024 year.

SMARTIE TUBE APPEAL

Smartie tubes will be distributed at our services over the Christmas period. Although the Rev Dr Keith Scott and his wife Lyn have retired from their posts at St John's Theological College in Kitwe, Zambia, we are continuing to support the students who are studying to be future clergymen in the Church of Zambia. The fees for one student are £600 per year and we are committed to sponsoring two students for the next few years. So please keep on saving your 20p pieces.



We will be showing Series 4 of The Chosen beginning on Monday 20 January at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre



CHURCH TOWER UPDATE



The necessity of having to carry out repairs to the belltower and spire was first brought to our attention when we received our Quinquennial report in 2021. Every church in the Church of Ireland has an inspection every five years and this helps ensure that we keep our buildings in as good a condition as possible. All Saints' Church is in a good state of repair, but due to the size and height of the tower and spire, the cost of replacing some defective stones, repointing the stones and replacing rainwater goods that are past their sell by date soon adds up, especially when you factor in the need for scaffolding. We estimate that the costs of the project will be in and around £290,000 and when other projects are included, **the total will possibly exceed £320,000.**



The process to secure funding for such a sizeable project was lengthy. Initially we made an application to the National Churches Trust and were delighted to secure a **Wolfson Grant of £10,000.** We were also selected as one of a small number of churches throughout the British Isles that were beneficiaries of the **National Churches Trust Last Chance Churches grant scheme** and we received a further **£34,985.**

Our major application was to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. In the application process we had to demonstrate the heritage of our church building and how it is cherished not only by ourselves, but by a great many groups within the town and beyond who also cherish our building which is one of the town's most significant architectural landmarks.

Thanks to securing a massive grant of **£172,708** from the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**, we have been able to commission two videos. One will promote All Saints as part of the town's architectural heritage and the other will be an information video for visitors to the church giving them some in-depth explanations of the history behind the church, its windows, communion silver and funeral monuments. Along with this we are developing a new visitors' guide and updating our 400th anniversary history book. The restoration project also had to show that we were conscious of offsetting the impact of our repairs by giving consideration to several projects that would benefit the environment. In 2025 we will be planting trees, helping clean up the Six Mile River bank and wilding a part of the graveyard.

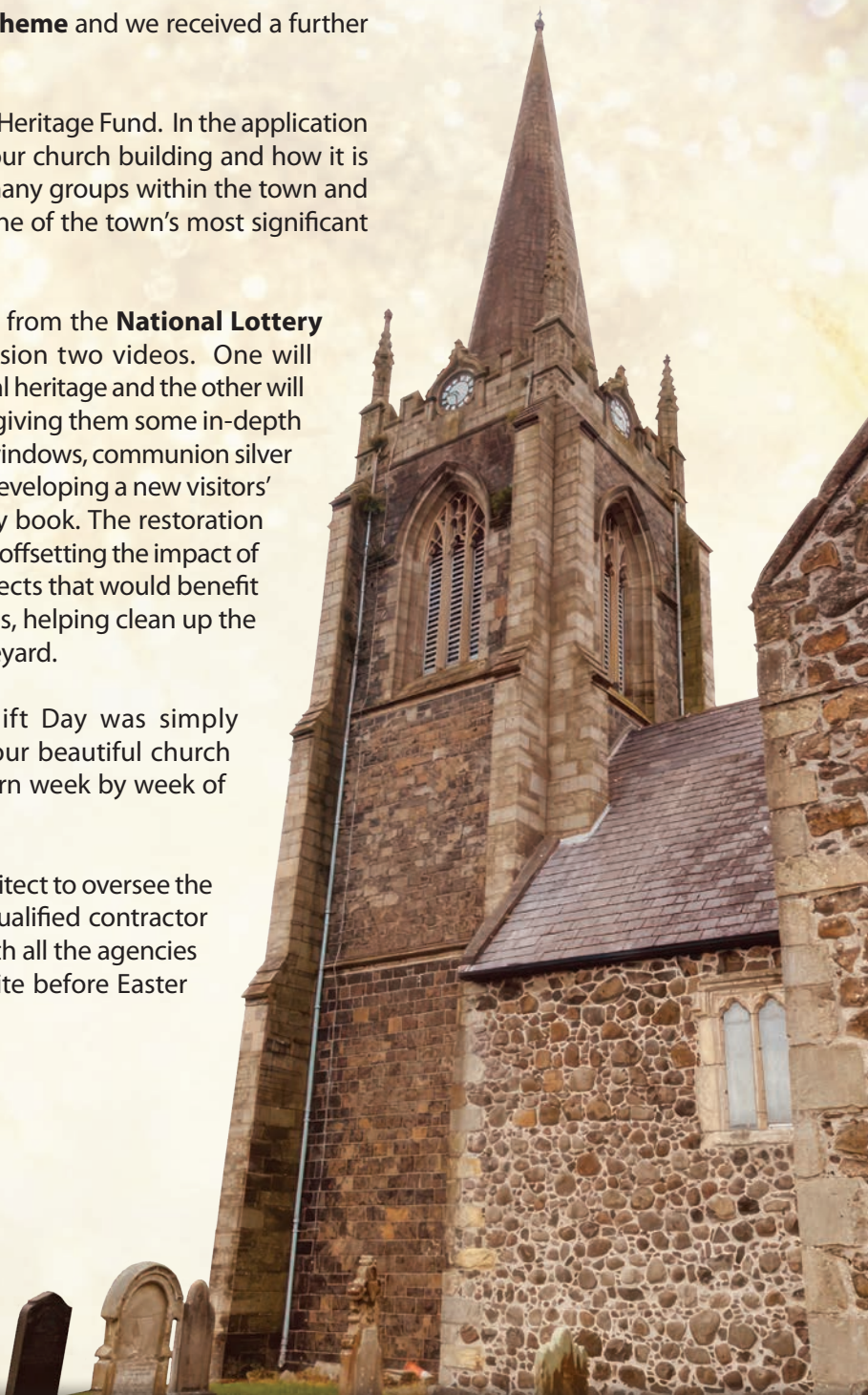
The **£51,237.70** raised through our Parish Gift Day was simply magnificent. It demonstrates how we cherish our beautiful church building which in turn is the place where we learn week by week of God's love for each of us.

We are now in the process of tendering for an architect to oversee the restoration work, then tendering for a suitably qualified contractor and appointing a project officer who will liaise with all the agencies involved. We now hope to see scaffolding on site before Easter 2025!

SUMMARY OF FUNDING

as of 31st October 2024

Wolfson Fabric Repair Grant	£10,000.00
Last Chance Churches/NCT	£34,985.00
Heritage Lottery Grant	£172,708.00
Parish Gift Day	£51,237.70
TOTAL TO DATE	£268,930.70



NEW ACTIVITIES AT ALL SAINTS'

FAMILY FUN NIGHT

During the summer we thought about how we might support and encourage some of the families who had come to Summer Club. One of the ideas was that we could have a fun night where families could come out to play games and indoor sports while getting to make new friends!

The first couple of nights have proven to be a real success so we are going to continue having the fun night every month on the 2nd Sunday of the month 6pm - 7.30pm.

So, if you find yourself at a loose end on the 2nd Sunday night of the month, come down to the hall for a time of fun, fellowship and family!



BLEND

There is very little in life that is as enjoyable as sitting down with friends for a bit of food and a good chat! That was what led us to decide that we should explore having a regular Parish breakfast. We contacted "The Top of the Town" and they were very helpful in offering to let us use the downstairs main room for our parish group if we had more than 20 people turn up. At our first get together in September we had nearly twice that many!

The large fry was extremely delicious and meeting with friends old and new made it a most memorable morning. After we had eaten and chatted, we heard from Andrea who joined our church and choir quite recently. She talked about how she enjoyed a lovely friendly welcome from the parishioners in what she is now delighted to call her church too!

So come along to Blend for some good craic, coffee and food on the 4th Saturday of every other month at 10am (next time is 23 February 2025!)

CONNOR TAKES THE CASTLE

SEPTEMBER 2024 AT CASTLEWELLAN CASTLE

1 Timothy 4:12 "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."



"Connor Takes the Castle" (CTTC) is an annual weekend where young people from around the Diocese of Connor gather at Castlewellan Castle to enjoy a time of teaching, prayer, praise and very little sleep. We were blessed this year with a large group of young people attending for the full weekend (13 in total) due in no small part to the financial support of our Select Vestry.

The times of teaching were especially encouraging. This year we had Simon Henry from the Church of Ireland Youth Department talking about Daniel - about how brave he was sticking to his faith even when it might cost him everything. We could all see how that resonated with choosing to follow Jesus today.

Along with the times of fellowship, teaching and praise there were some fun activities too. Thanks to the rain holding off on Saturday we had a great day of outdoor activity. On Sunday the rain was torrential, so we gave our all at Karaoke with Bishop George in the audience. I am not sure what he made of my rendition of a Britney Spears classic!



I am sure that we have all had times when our faith became more real to us. As young people we move from accepting what our parents or others teach us to making our own mind up about things. That's an important part of growing up in faith! During one of our discussions a member of our group said that it was last year at Connor Takes the Castle they decided to follow Jesus. There had been no fuss or drama. Just a young person deciding that walking in faith with their friends was the right thing for them. The faith of the young can indeed inspire us all. Here is what Connor Takes the Castle means to one of our members, 'Connor takes the castle, to me, means to gather in faith with the people who will not out you as a freak for believing in our saviour.'

It's a great privilege for Stephen, Claire, Maria and me to be involved in youth work. Through the practical support of the Select Vestry and the prayerful support of the parishioners, we are all helping our young people to find hope and purpose in Christ. God willing, we might have some leaders like Timothy growing up in our Church!

Peter



THE POWER OF SPEAKING THE RIGHT WORDS

by Robert J. Tamasy writing for CBMC International's Monday Manna 18 November 2024

We live in unprecedented times. The airwaves are filled with words, as is the Internet. Thanks to social media, anyone with the capacity for talking can post any information, ideas and opinions they choose to present. Because TV news is now 24/7, there is no end to commentary and expositions on the day's news and events. The round-the-clock hours must be filled with sound, not silence. As a result, we could say that never in the history of humankind has so much been said by so many - about so little.

One consequence of this is that people so eager to speak often fail to pause and consider what they are speaking. Positive or negative, gentle or harsh, they open their mouths and let the words fly out. It reminds me of Proverbs 10:19 which warns, "When there are many words, wrongdoing is unavoidable. But he who restrains his lips is wise."

But even if we choose not to get caught up in the communications chaos of social media and limit our exposure to the rantings that are so common in the mass media, we still are not immune to the power of words for good or for ill. We can be the perpetrators or victims (or both) of words carelessly used.

Email is a wonderful and rapid way of communicating. But if we do not exercise caution by first reviewing and reconsidering what we have written before hitting "Send," we might regret it later. Especially if what we write is in a moment of anger or high emotion. The same can be true when leaving voicemail messages or texts on our smartphones. What sounded good and fitting at first may cause considerable distress later.

With effective communicating so essential for the 21st century business and professional world, but at the

same time so challenging, here are some principles from the Bible that can be helpful to us:

Choose our words wisely. I have known people who were more than eager to give others a piece of their mind that they could not afford to lose. Considering in advance the impact of the words we intend to say can determine whether they will be beneficial or destructive. "A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear" (Proverbs 25:11-12).

Consider our words as tools for building up, not tearing down. In our world we can find so much negativity, often involving words spoken and written with bad intentions. It is not necessary for us to contribute to that. By using words that lift up rather than tear down, we can make a significant difference. "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Ephesians 4:29).

Counter words that are hurtful. Have you ever watched someone after he or she has been the target of angry or vindictive words? Perhaps you have been one of them at times yourself. Knowing the pain and discomfort that hurtful words can cause, we should strive instead to offer words that heal, encourage and inspire. "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Proverbs 12:18). Do not be part of the communications disease. Rather, strive to be part of the cure.

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Why don't you ever see Father Christmas in hospital?
He has private elf care

What was the wise men's favourite Christmas carol?
'Oh Camel, Ye Faithful'

What's white and goes up?
A confused snowflake

What do you call a snowman with a six pack?
An abdominal snowman

Why is Mrs Claus always checking Santa's phone?
He knows where all the naughty girls live

What does Santa use to bake cakes?
Elf-raising flour

What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney?
Claus-trophobia



ALL SAINTS' GENEROSITY

The Northern Ireland Hospice Big Coffee Morning raised which was held on Sunday 20 October at our family service raised £506.00. We were delighted to welcome David from NI Hospice to one of our Wednesday morning Holy Communion services and passed on to him our donation.

Annual Donations from All Saints'

CMS (Sponsorship for Students in Zambia)	£1,800.00
Muckamore Parish Development Association	£3,000.00
Church Army	£310.00
Church of Ireland Chaplaincy Queens University	£410.00
Church of Ireland Retirement Trust	£260.00
Church of Ireland Youth Department	£260.00
Church's Ministry of Healing	£260.00
Divine Healing Ministries	£260.00
Leprosy Mission NI	£1,310.00
Missions to Seafarers	£260.00
NI Children's Hospice	£260.00
RBL Poppy Appeal	£260.00
USPG*	£260.00
	£8,910.00



The focus for donations to the Extra Mile Bucket continues to be for the Leprosy Mission.

£25 could cure a person suffering from Leprosy

£10 could buy a pair of protective sandals

£15 could buy a self-care kit to care for hands and feet damaged by leprosy

£40 could provide training for a leprosy affected person

Your gift in the Extra Mile Bucket will help transform the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in the world. Whatever you give, you'll be playing a part in bringing hope, healing and health to people affected by leprosy in Asia and Africa. Thank you for your support!



The application process for the National Heritage Lottery Fund has encouraged us to look outwards from our church community and further develop the links we have in the local community and beyond. The parish has strong links with the Antrim Branch of the Royal British Legion whose colours are laid up in the Massereene Chapel. In 2022 The former Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey preached at the dedication of the World War 2 memorial and gave a personal recollection of many of those from the town who served and whose names are recorded on the memorial. On 8 November, we invited Dean McKelvey back to give a more detailed talk on some of the personalities and character who left Antrim and gave active service. Donations received on the evening raised £410 for the poppy appeal.



OASIS FOOD BANK

In association with the Oasis Group we have been joining with churches in Antrim in supporting the food bank project which has provided much needed practical care for families in the Antrim area who are enduring difficult times. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, it would be good to think about those from whom Christmas will be a time of difficulty. Families are referred to the food bank through Social Services to Oasis who provide them with a food parcel. Please consider bringing an item or two from the list across and leave it in the box in the porch. This is a marvellous way of showing God's love in a very practical way. I hope we will give it our fullest support.

Donation Suggestions:

- Selection Box
- Mince Pies
- Christmas Pudding
- Tins of Sweets
- Gravy Granules
- Tinned Ham
- Tinned Soup
- Savoury Snacks
- Cereal
- Pasta
- Rice
- Tea Bags
- Coffee
- Hot chocolate
- Gift Vouchers
- Slipper socks
- Tinned fruit
- Hot water bottle
- Cuppa soup
- Toiletry gift sets
- Toilet rolls
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Roll on deodorant

MAKE A DONATION AT OUR NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS SERVICE

CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH

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

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| Baby | Family |
| Everyone | Space |
| Born | Manger |
| Living | Bed |
| Home | Joseph |
| David | Syria |
| Nazareth | Mary |
| Visitors | Empire |
| Room | Taxes |
| Quirinius | Bethlehem |
| Augustus | Guest |
| Jesus | Stable |

FUN CHRISTMAS FOOD FACTS FOR KIDS

One of the most exciting things to do at Christmas is to eat lots of Christmas food. Here are some facts about Christmas food for you to enjoy - yummy!

- Mince pies used to contain real minced beef.** The mince pies that we eat now have lots of fruit and spices in them, but 200 years ago they were made from real minced beef.
- It is said to be unlucky to eat a mince pie with a knife.** Luckily, we

use our fingers and thumbs rather than a knife and fork!

- Christmas pudding used to be a soup.** In the 1300s, Christmas pudding was called 'frumenty'. It looked like a soup that was made from beef and mutton, fruit, wine and spices. People used to eat it before Christmas so that they weren't too full up before the main meal on Christmas day.
- Candy canes were invented to keep kids quiet in church.** In 1670,

a German choirmaster (a person who leads a choir) asked a sweet shop to make sweets (in the shape of a shepherd's hook) for the children at his church to keep them quiet during the Christmas festivities.

- Instead of turkey at Christmas, it used to be a pig's head and mustard.** Imagine sitting down for your Christmas dinner and seeing a pig's head in the middle of the table. Turkey didn't appear on the Christmas menu until Henry VIII in the 1500s.

WHO'S WHO

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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.