

AUTUMN 2025

SAINTS *Alive!*

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THE MAGAZINE OF ALL SAINTS' PARISH, ANTRIM

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

Luke 15:8-10

Jesus said, "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Most of us will have been in this situation. We have lost something important and searched high and low for it. Such searches often disintegrate into panic. Successful searches invariably end in great rejoicing when we find the missing key, glasses or passport. Our jubilation at the outcome of the search reminds us how much more God rejoices when ever a lost one is found again. It also tells us that God never gives up in looking out for us when we have moved away from him and our faith has begun to wither.

Many people search for meaning in life with questions such as 'is this all there is?' or 'what is it all about' and expect complicated answers. Whatever beliefs they may outwardly express, most people are searching for something - or someone - that they cannot name or understand. The answer can be very simple and found in unexpected places.

There was a small boy who one morning packed himself some sandwiches and told his mother he was going to the



park to look for God. Lunchtime came and he stopped at a park bench for a rest. An older lady was already sitting at the bench and the boy started to chat to her. He thought she might be hungry too so he shared his sandwiches with her. When he got back home his mother asked him, 'Did you find God?' 'O yes,' he said, 'And she has a lovely smile.' The older lady was having supper with her husband, 'Did you have a good day?' he asked. 'O yes,' she replied, 'I found God in the park.' 'Really?' he said. 'And what was God like?' 'Much younger than I expected,' she replied.

We may think we have 'lost' God, but whenever we meet kindness, generosity, compassion and love, then we have found God and others will catch a glimpse of God when they meet these qualities in us.

One of my favourite lines in a prayer is this:

Forget the God you don't believe in and meet the God who believes in you.

If you have strayed away from the fellowship of God's people, he is always on the look out for us. Why not join us on a Sunday at 8.30am or 11.30am or a Wednesday at 11.00am and have your faith renewed.

*Adapted from BRF New Daylight
Wednesday 4 June by Margaret Silf*

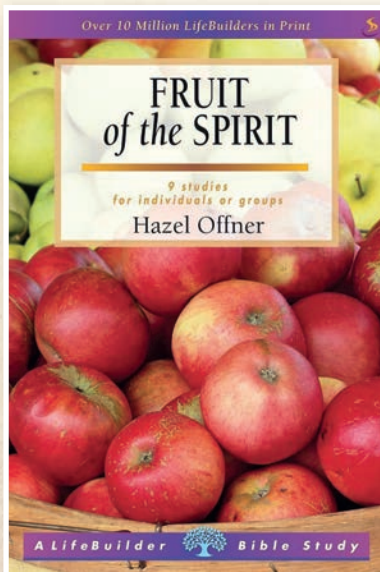


NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY PRAYER BREAKFAST

I was surprised and delighted to receive an invitation from our MP Robin Swann to attend the 2025 National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast for church leaders. It was held in Westminster Hall in the Houses of Parliament complex on 24 June. On the previous evening Helen and I attended Choral Evensong in Westminster Abbey and given a tour of the Abbey at the conclusion of the service.



The breakfast began at 7.30am and we were welcomed by the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Lord Speaker. The hymns were led by Keith and Kristyn Getty (In Christ alone fame) and the main speaker was Professor John Lennox who originates from Armagh and was professor of mathematics at Oxford. The Northern Ireland table had MPs Sammy Wilson and Gregory Campbell and the Presbyterian Moderator Dr Trevor Gribben. It was a memorable morning rounded off with Robin giving me a tour of the two houses. My only complaint was the disappointment of the main course - bubble and squeak with a warm spring onion topping. You can't beat an Ulster Fry!



STUDY GROUP: FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Beginning on **Wednesday 1 October - Wednesday 26 November**, we are going to meet at 7.30pm - 9.00pm in the parish centre to look at how we can develop our faith to both grow and show the fruit of the Spirit in our lives: the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control listed in Galatians 5:22,23. In these studies we will see the fruit illustrated in the lives of characters from the Bible - the joy of the disciples at seeing their risen Lord; the faithfulness of Jehoshaphat when facing a huge enemy army; the self-control of David in resisting revenge on Saul. Everyone is welcome to share and develop their faith in Jesus.

THE REVEREND PETER BLAKE



Hello everyone!

I hope you are all keeping well.

As I write, I am about to begin my second cycle of chemotherapy. The first cycle started off with lots of side effects, but I am extremely glad to say that as the 3-week cycle ends I am feeling so well. Better than I have felt in a very long time! That gives me great encouragement that when the chemo ends, I will be feeling stronger and healthier than I was even before I began to feel very unwell.

As you know, I consider being a Priest to be the greatest privilege that anyone could have. Being there for others in their time of need and offering prayer, encouragement and the odd 'dad joke' is something that I find so fulfilling. The way that you have all responded when I needed a lift has really helped me through this journey. The many, many cards I have received. The notes and texts that you have taken the time to write. The lovely, unexpected, and appreciated gifts. It has all really meant so much to me.

I really find myself humbled by just how much love I have received from you all, my church brothers and sisters. It is no small thing to know that when I have been having a tough day there are hundreds of people praying that I will get through it.

I could never have imagined that 2025 would turn out to be a year like this. I could not even have told you who my doctor was at the start of the year! As the year has gone on and I have come out the other side of uncertainty, surgery, and treatment, I have learned a lot about what really matters. Let me share three very brief thoughts with you (I know I always say that, but I really will be brief this time!)

Firstly, I have learned how important it is to spend time with those who care for me and that I love in return. Secondly that today is a good day and tomorrow, well I will worry about that when it comes around. Thirdly that, as Terry preached on Sunday just past, I especially experience God in the people who really think I am worth caring about. That reminds me so much of why I chose to follow Jesus, who showed me that he valued my life more than his own.

So, thank you for all your support during this time. I look forward to narrowly missing you all with flying bars of chocolate as soon after I have finished my treatment as possible.

God Bless

Peter

Rev. Peter

CHURCH FIRE RESTORATION

The past seven months have been extremely stressful waiting for updates from our Conservation Specialist, Ian Maconachie who has been in negotiation with our insurers, Congregational. The tenders for the work to restore the church have come in at around £2million, such is the extent of the damage that needs to be repaired. Although there is very little structural damage, the penetration of the soot into every conceivable corner of the church has been catastrophic.

It has caused damage to most of the paint and plaster work, some of the wooden panels have been irreparably damaged, the organ needs to be stripped out and cleaned, part of the ceiling has to be removed, the monuments and stonework have to be carefully cleaned. All the stained glass windows will be cleaned using cotton buds. All the pews have been removed to be stripped down and revarnished. The church has to be rewired a new lighting system and sound system will be installed.

The current heating system is getting very close to the end of its usefulness. It is a very inefficient and expensive method of heating the church. The members of the Select Vestry have decided that it would be much more cost effective to replace the current system with a new heating system when the church, due to the restoration work is completely clear of pews and carpets. To do this at a later date, when the system eventually fails, would incur huge extra costs as we would have to repair walls, lift carpets and flooring. The estimated cost is in the region of £100,000 but thankfully we have the resources to fund this.

When we reopen for worship in mid-2026, we will ensure that the building will look just the same as we have always remembered it. Although the pews may be a little lighter in colour as 200 years of varnish will have been removed from them, everything else should be just as it was - except it will be a good deal warmer on a cold winter's morning.



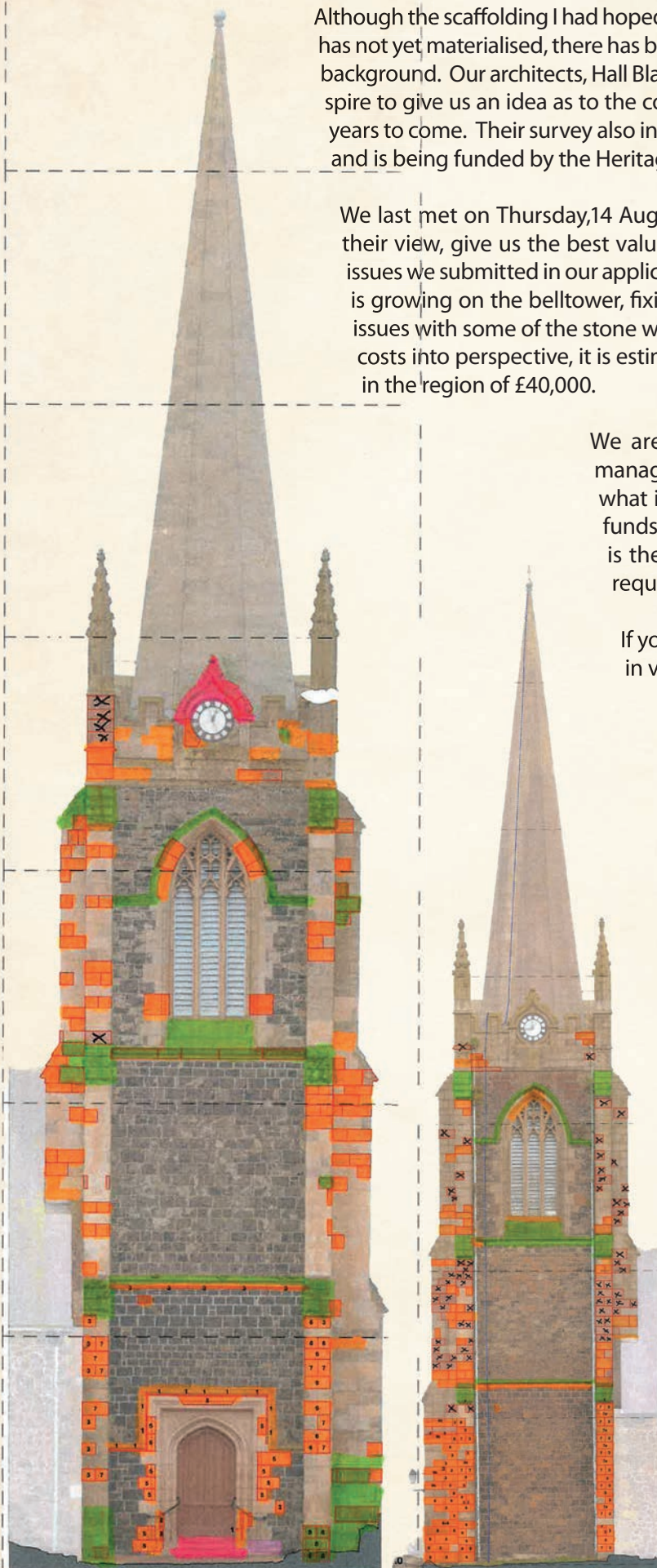
SPIRE UPDATE

Although the scaffolding I had hoped would have been in place over the summer months has not yet materialised, there has been a great deal of preparatory work going on in the background. Our architects, Hall Black Douglas, have surveyed the whole bell tower and spire to give us an idea as to the complete work that needs to be carried out over the years to come. Their survey also includes the work that needs to be done immediately and is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Churches Trust.

We last met on Thursday, 14 August and HBD gave us three options that would, in their view, give us the best value for the funds we have available to deal with the issues we submitted in our application to HLF such as removing the vegetation which is growing on the belltower, fixing leadwork and rainwater pipes and dealing with issues with some of the stone work which is showing its age. To put some of these costs into perspective, it is estimated that the cost of the scaffolding alone may be in the region of £40,000.

We are now in the process of meeting with our fund manager from The National Lottery Heritage fund to see what is the best way forward to maximise the use of our funds to get the best value for money and exploring what is the most effective way of dealing with issues which require the most urgent attention.

If you want to see the projects HBD have been involved in visit their website at www.hallblackdouglas.com



HOLIDAY BIBLE CLUB

Chris and Ross, aka the Play it by Ear Christian Drama group led the children of All Saints' Parish Antrim's Funday Club on a week long Wild West adventure which looked at how God led the Children of Israel from captivity in Egypt to the Promised Land.



Each evening had a different theme: God calls, God rescues, God forgives, God teaches and God guides. Songs were sung and stories were told and it was fantastic that our puppet friends, Lucy and Bert were also back with us. Each night Chris and the children taught the hapless Cowboy Keith (Ross) how to be a good cowboy. Cowboy Keith faced a different challenge every evening and his comic antics were one of the highlights of the day.

With a great range of crafts, games, snacks, action songs, story telling and memorising the bible verse, Jesus said, 'the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full John 10:10, the two hour programme passed in a flash.

Thanks to Chris and Ross for a marvellous and memorable week and we look forward to next year's adventure.



NEXT STEPS & SUMMER MADNESS

In my experiences of faith, I've found Church isn't just a building, it's a community and a feeling. You can experience it through quiet conversations with other members of the congregation, through listening to a sermon or even at vibrant events like the Summer Madness festival. It's about finding connection and inspiration in diverse ways. Summer madness was an absolutely amazing experience. It was three days of pure joy and worship in a way that was so different to experience than any other setting. There were hundreds of young people in a massive tent, hands raised into the air as they sang out hymns. It was an experience that can hardly be put into words, and you would have to be there to gain a full sense of what the atmosphere was like. In terms of growth for us youth within the church through summer madness, we all became so much closer. We were up until the early hours of the morning singing worship songs as Kai, Mason and Joseph played the guitars and drums. We ate meals together and participated in all sorts of very fun activities.

Next steps is an amazing community. I have become friends with so many people who are both similar and different to me. We have fun playing tennis and badminton, but we also have the ability to be truthful with each other. We have discussions about our faith which we always find to be enlightening. You don't have to have a strong faith to take part in these discussions. None of us have all the answers, and faith is such a personal thing. You just have to be willing listen to others and be open about your own views. I know how much this matters to people who attend. I would definitely recommend both Summer Madness and Next Steps to everyone, as i know my own life has been blessed by both.

Lauren Blake



THRIVE AT ALL SAINTS, ANTRIM

At All Saints, we believe that community and friendship are a vital part of our walk with God, and our new women's group, Thrive, is one way we live that out together. Meeting every couple of months, Thrive offers women a gentle rhythm of gathering to pause, share, and be encouraged. It is a chance to step away from the demands of daily life and simply enjoy time together in a relaxed, welcoming space.

Each time we meet, there is the opportunity to chat, laugh, and listen, but also to try something new. Through shared activities, conversation, and fellowship, women have discovered not only fresh interests but also deeper connections with one another. In doing so, Thrive has become more than just a group—it is a place where friendships are being formed and faith is strengthened.

Some of our activities this past season included Mocktails and Munchies, Candle Painting and a Pamper Night. As we look forward to the new season, our prayer is that Thrive will continue to be a blessing to the women of All Saints. May it be a space where we can encourage one another, grow in friendship, and above all, flourish in the life that God has called us to live together.



ALL SAINTS' ONLINE

There are 3 ways of getting to the Parish YouTube site. Once there you can see services that are being streamed live and services that have been recorded.

DIRECT LINK: Please type this link into your web browser <https://www.youtube.com/@allsaints4713/streams> or **allsaints4713** directly into YouTube. Make sure to hit subscribe to make the Parish channel easier to find next time.

PARISH WEBSITE: Visit <https://antrim.connor.anglican.org/> and click on the link for church webcam

ALL SAINTS FACEBOOK: Go to the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/allsaintsparishantrim> and click on "Watch Now"

WHO'S WHO

Vicar: **The Venerable Dr Stephen McBride**

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Curate Assistant: **The Rev Claire Thompson BSc**

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Sexton & Caretaker:

Mr Cecil Barton

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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.