

St Columbanus

Ballyholme



Holy Week and Easter
Look Back to Christmas
New Cross and Doors
Upcoming Events



..On the way
together..

The Parishioner

March/April 2024

The Rambling Rector

There have been many notable, even 'celebrated' deaths in world history. We jump to John F Kennedy the way earlier generations probably jumped to Marie Antoinette or Cleopatra. Yet no one refers to "the assassination" or "the guillotining" or "the poisoning" with them singularly in mind. So why, then, when we speak of "the crucifixion", do most people with or without a faith still know who and what we're talking about? Something about the strange death of the man many identified as God's Son, commands special attention. The reverberations of this death, this execution, above all others, continue to be felt nearly 2000 years later. Of the thousands of executions prosecuted by the Romans, only Jesus' crucifixion is remembered as being noteworthy at all, let-alone world-changing. Granted, the premature deaths of Eva Peron, John Lennon or Princess Diana endowed their memories with an aura of mystical stardom. But even people with only a residual knowledge of what happened on Good Friday and three days after it, retain a sense that Jesus' crucifixion holds an unrepeatable significance. A significance which has shaped the life and death of His followers ever since, and which still demands a response today, whoever we are.



SED



Light the Beacons: St Patrick's Day Celebrations 2024

'Light the Beacons' is the theme for this year's annual St Patrick's Day festival which will focus on praying for a rekindling of the fire of faith that Patrick lit in Ireland almost 1600 years ago.

The diocesan celebrations will take place on Saturday 16 March and include special prayer services in parishes on Sunday 17 March.

Our guest preacher at the Festival Service at 11.45am in Down Cathedral is Rt Revd Dr Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster.

Bishop David says: "Bishop Jill's scholarly and yet deeply spiritual insights into the lives of the saints including St Patrick (see her book *Lighting the Beacons: Kindling the Flame of Faith in our Hearts*) means she is the ideal person to encourage us to pray as a diocese for rekindling of the fire of faith that Patrick lit in Ireland almost 1600 years ago.

"In 433AD in defiance of the pagan king, Laoise, Patrick lit a Paschal fire to celebrate Easter. It was said that if that Paschal fire was not put out on that day it would never be extinguished. Almost 1600 years later the fire of the gospel has not been put out but needs fanned into flame in Ireland again."

Bishop David will light a symbolic fire at the end of the Festival Service and a representative from each church in the diocese will take a torch and a container of concentrated paraffin oil back to their parish.

On the evening of 17 March, St Patrick's Day, every church large and small, will hold a special service of prayer for revival. With beacons lit, we'll be asking God to light the fire of the gospel in Ireland and in that local church context once again.

PROGRAMME

9.15am: Holy Communion at Saul

10.15am: Prayer Pilgrimage from Saul to Downpatrick

11.45am: Festival Service in Down Cathedral with Bishop Jill Duff

Wreath laying ceremony at St Patrick's Grave and lighting of symbolic beacon

1.00pm: Complimentary 'Picnic in the Pews'



Radio 4 for St Patrick's Day

After the 8 o'clock news on 17 March, Sunday Worship on Radio 4 will be from St Patrick's Cathedral Dublin. It is the first Radio 4 broadcast from St Patrick's in more than 20 years and will be recorded earlier that week. The preacher will be the Prebendary of Wicklow, or as we know him better, our own Canon Simon Doogan.

Communion Lunch

Communion Lunch - Thursday 14th December 2023

The Communion Lunch took place on 14th December 2023. We were delighted to welcome 35 senior members of our congregation to celebrate Holy Communion together, followed by a light lunch. Following lunch, the P5 choir from Ballyholme Primary School came along to perform. Their singing of Carols and Christmas music was wonderful and the children were so enthusiastic and excited for Christmas. What a lovely way to finish our lunch and send everyone home feeling very uplifted.

Thank you to Simon and Jan, Ann our wonderful cook and all the volunteers who made the lunch possible. Also a big thank you Mrs Rothwell, teaching staff and wonderful Ballyholme Primary School P5 choir.

Our next **Communion Lunch will take place on Thursday 21st March at 12.30pm**

If you would like to join us, please contact the Parish office. We would love to see you. An invitation will be sent nearer the time for you to respond re attendance, dietary requirements and if transport is required.

I look forward to seeing everyone in March.

Margaret



Muddy Church

Since the New Year began, Muddy Church children have been studying parables. The Muddy Church young helpers have been dramatically presenting the parables, which has made it very easy for the little ones to understand Jesus' teaching. They have learnt about the wise man who built his house on the rock and about the

shepherd who went in search of his lost sheep.

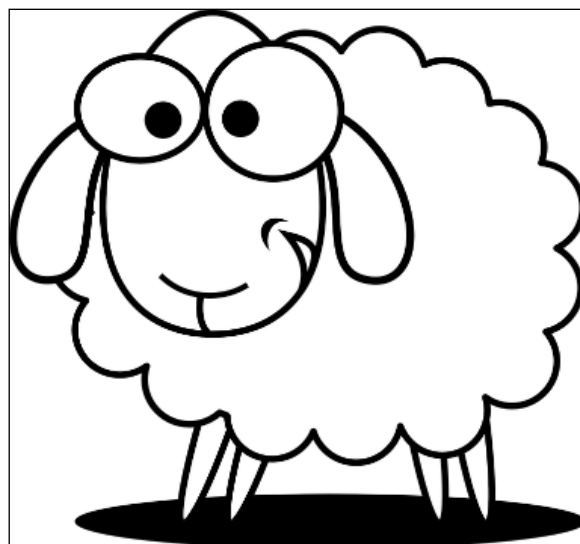
As it's Muddy Church the children have completed experiments and played games to illustrate these points, and of course there has been lots of craft! It was lovely when the children went into the Communion service with little sheep bookmarks and gave these out to the congregation.

BLAST!

This group has been learning about Worship. Worship is a word used a lot in church and often refers to singing, but how do you worship if you don't like singing?

So, we used psalms to help us understand why we worship God and all the different ways we can. E.g. dancing, musical instruments, and asking God for help when we're worried.

The group is quite musical and so have been learning a new song and have been learning percussion instruments. We have created a band to teach the song to the younger children... and hope to perform it in Church on Palm Sunday.



Tune Tots

We still have a lovely core group of families who come along to sing and make, with new families still joining. The children love the song time and we had a special treat making Top Hats! YUM!

Paula

Jumpin' Dates

Easter Jumpin' – 3rd-5th April

Registration:

Sunday 10 March after Muddy Church

Wednesday 13 March 7.15 - 7.45pm in the Parish Centre

Summer Jumpin' 12th-16th August



HOLY WEEK

24

24-29 March

Ballyholme Presbyterian Church

Palm Sunday 6.30pm
Monday - Friday 7.30pm

Rev Peter Lyle

REformed

BAPTISM

December

31st - Rose Josephine Donnelly Clegg, daughter of Andrew John Clegg and Sara Anne Donnelly Clegg

Parishioner Cost/Envelope

The Parishioner comes to you free of charge. To help with overheads, once a year we enclose an envelope so you can make a contribution towards our running costs. If all recipients give £5 we would certainly cover ourselves.

Every church does it slightly differently, but in Ballyholme we have our annual general meeting over lunch in the Parish Centre, immediately after 11.30 church. Please add your name to the list to let us know you are coming (along with any dietary requirements) and we will be extremely glad to see you. Easter Vestry usually takes no more than an hour (likewise our monthly meetings – 7.45 to 9pm is the norm). With so many new parishioners taking up membership this year, some of you are probably wondering what's involved. So...

What happens at the Easter Vestry Meeting?

The Rector is in the Chair and our Honorary Secretary traditionally takes the Minutes. The Honorary Treasurer presents for adoption our church accounts (for the year ending 31 December 2023) as signed off by our outgoing Select Vestry. Our Glebewardens then give an overview of what has been an exceptionally busy year for them looking after our church properties. The Rector deals with Any Other Notified Business (brought to his attention by the day before) before proceeding to elections: Churchwardens, Glebewardens and 12 members for our Select Vestry (the committee which meets monthly for finance, fixtures and fittings decisions).

If I go, will I end up with a job?

Only if you have been nominated and seconded by the deadline (Sunday 10 March). We do our best to fill all our key posts ahead of the AGM, so no one is ever press-ganged on the day. In saying that, everyone has gifts and skills to share with their church family in the service of God and so we hope everyone will consider making themselves available for vestry service at some point when the time feels right. Opportunities to serve also exist at diocesan and national church level where the AGM/monthly structure is replicated. Speak to the Rector if you are interested.



New Doors for the Parish Centre

The long-suffering front doors of the Parish Centre don't owe us much. No one could accuse us of not persevering, but at this point in their lives they have received replacement locks, handles, panes of glass and several new coats of paint. Like many wooden doors exposed to the elements, they swell in the rain and shrink in the sun, but successive Glebewardens have gone above and beyond to keep them opening and closing – most of the time!

Truth be told, Vestry was biding its time in the hope of replacing the doors with automatic, electric replacements when money became available. Praise God that following an extremely generous family bequest towards the end of last year, the Vestry's vision is about to be realised. At the time of writing, tenders have been sought and the design will incorporate a safety panel and a small canopy overhead to offer shelter from the worst of the weather.

What makes the upgrade feel even more appropriate, is that the parishioner being lovingly remembered knew about the challenges of access to public buildings. Long after the person could no longer make it comfortably into Church for worship, they came to the Parish Centre for our Wednesday morning service. We pray that the doors will quickly prove a blessing to all who come and go from our halls, especially those who are mobility restricted.



I am writing to say thank you to your church for the kind and generous gifts given to our Family Appeal in December. Your church enabled us to give gifts to over 500 children, quite a substantial increase from last year. As well as gifts we were able to help people with utility bills and vouchers for butchers in the local area.

Thank you again and may God bless Ballyholme Parish abundantly in 2024!

Kind regards, Linda Cunliffe Church leader



On 10th January we began in a most enjoyable way for Ballyholme MU; a delicious evening meal was enjoyed in The Broadway Room of Bangor Golf Club. It was a "tip top" evening spending time with each other, eating delicious food and of course a couple of amusing games thrown in too!



On Monday 5th February our first meeting of 2024 welcomed a familiar speaker; Paula McIlwaine. In February each year we plan an "Overseas Speaker", so it was brilliant that Paula accepted our invitation. She was able to update us about the medical project in which she is involved taking place in the country of Lebanon. Unfortunately she was unable to visit there as planned in 2023 as at the moment no visits can take place due to civil unrest. We pray the situation may change and the essential medical clinics can go ahead soon.

She also shared with us about the Parish of St Brendan's Sydenham, where she is helping out with the Parish Ministry. Thank you for a great evening Paula.

We also collected items for our annual appeal for Women's Aid and "Emergency Admission Wash Bags" for the Ulster Hospital. Thank you everyone for their generosity, Karen Hunt will deliver these, so thanks to her too.



Afternoon Tea
Hosted by
MU
Sat
9th
March

2pm
to
4pm
£10

Tickets from Parish Office

Upcoming Events

March is a busy and exciting month for Ballyholme MU. Our March meeting is on Monday 4th March at 7.30pm, please wear flat comfy shoes for we will have some toe tapping music and possibly some "tippy toes" too!! See you there.

Remember the cake stands? Well Afternoon Tea is back hosted by us! There was a fantastic response last year, supporting our MU Worldwide Projects. It will be held on Saturday 9th March, 2pm - 4pm. Tickets for this year's event are £10 from the Parish Office, so please invite your friends to make up a table. Ladies and Gentlemen are welcome!!

The MU Festival Service will be in Dromore Cathedral on 21st March 2024

Members are invited to attend the Holy Week service at Ballyholme Presbyterian, Monday 25th March at 7.30.

Monday Morning Coffee continues weekly except for Easter Monday, why not come along.

Best Wishes and New Year Joy

Yvonne & MU Team.

It's as if we'd never been away! January saw the welcome return of coffee between the two main morning services. If you haven't joined us yet, either linger a little at the end of Good News at Ten or turn up early before 11.30 and make your way to the foyer of the Parish Centre or to a seat in the Kajiado Room.



With coffee and buns already on-tap at Café Church on the first of the month and Communion on the fourth, mostly it's the second and third Sundays. The helpers rota has filled up nicely, but there's always room for new names so please contact Robbie Jackson (thanks to Robbie and Fiona for driving this for us) on 07934 752314 or robbie.jackson@btinternet.com

As a follow on from our night away we are inviting

All the ladies in our churches to go on a walk in
Crawfordsburn Country Park on
Sunday 21st April



Meet at the centre in the park at 2:30pm
 Return to the centre for coffee at 3:30pm

(Please join us for a coffee at 3:30pm if walking is not your favourite thing!)



Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid week is 12th to 18th May this year. We would really appreciate help with delivering envelopes in the Ballyholme and Ballycrochan areas. We have designated roads to deliver to.

Again this year we are only delivering envelopes with collection points to be confirmed.

If you would have a little time to help deliver envelopes please leave your name and contact number with the Parish office.

Thank you

Susan and Jonnie Stockton, Fiona Oliva

Alpha is designed to be run regularly in a church where the congregation can see how good it is and therefore feel confident to invite their family and friends. In Ballyholme Parish we have had over 60 people on the last 3 Alpha Courses. We ran Alpha after the Parish weekend in Spring 2022 and again in 2023. These two Alpha courses were great with new people joining the house group Michelle Savage leads. Ian and Candice Foster lead a new house group that started after the last Alpha Course and they would welcome others who would like to join them.



We are now on our third Alpha course, building on the growing confidence we have as a congregation that this is not to be missed. That we can safely invite family and friends and they will thank us for the opportunity. Alpha is designed to be a safe space where we can all grow closer to Jesus. Understanding more of why he died for us and what it means practically to have the Holy Spirit as our daily advocate and guide.

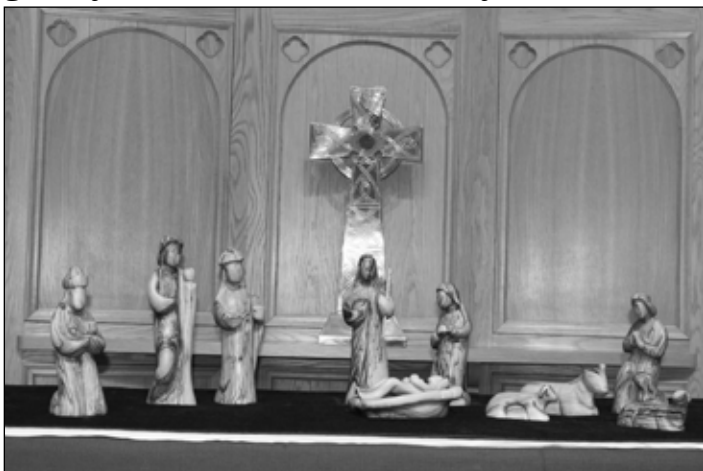
We want to develop an invitational church culture where we invite people we know to community and church events. Inviting people we know to a church event helps them realise there is a welcoming community of faith here where they can explore faith in Jesus.

Rev Jan Stevenson and the Alpha team



Remembering the late Rosemary Thompson, a Mom's Mom

After the Nativity play this beautiful Nativity Set was presented in memory of the late Rosemary Thompson. The children who took part in the play brought up the figurine for the character they played. The set was on display in the Church over the festive period and was greatly admired. This is a lovely addition to our Christsms decorations for years to come.





By the time you read this, the Curatage should be back on the rental market. Please pray for good tenants who will be happy in No 34 and treat our property with care and respect.

The gratitude of the whole parish must go to our two Glebewardens. With Ivan Humphreys busy on the Parish Centre electrical inspections, our Beverley Gardens Project Manager was Steven Nickell. As one of half of Nickell & Richmond, Master Builders, no one could have been better placed to oversee the significant list of repairs. While some of these works were identified in the last Diocesan Quinquennial Inspection, others, regrettably, were only discovered after we served our tenants Notice to Quit last spring.

As we thank Steven and Ivan, we also record our gratitude to those who have responded over recent months with gifts of money. Suffice to say, we had not budgeted for a £20,000 plus renovation bill this financial year. Praise God a number of parishioners have come forward voluntarily and made sizeable contributions towards our costs. The sum received to date is £18,000 and we acknowledge in these pages the difference those very sizeable donations have made to our wider income/expenditure story.

Thank you to all concerned and, as the final repair invoices come in for payment, any last minute gifts to defray our total bill will be very gratefully received.



New Cross for the Church Steps

With the erection of our new parish welcome sign on the grassy mound to the rear of the church garden, the obvious place to position our outdoor cross this Holy Week is adjacent to the steps.

Many of you admired the Christmas Tree which we put there this year, and it feels entirely natural that the cross should take its place for Easter.

To make the most of the new location and with the cost of materials being generously met by a parish family, a fully dismantlable 10 foot cross is currently on order, in tulipwood.

Once in situ, we will decide if it needs some subtle spotlighting, but we promise: no fairy lights!



Thanks to all those who have expressed their interest in making a trip to the Holy Land following our November parish weekend. Alas, thoughts of travelling this September or October now appear far too optimistic with early hopes for a Christmas/Hanukkah/Eid ceasefire long-since evaporated. Naturally we will want to put some peaceful water between the end of hostilities and fixing dates for any pilgrimage, but rest assured, Archdeacon Mones Farah remains on stand-by for when the dust finally settles. In the meantime, here's a prayer for the Israel/Gaza situation issued by the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury:-



God of Compassion and Justice,
 we cry out to you for all who suffer in the Holy Land today.
 For your precious children, Israelis and Palestinians, traumatised in fear for their lives...
 for the families of the bereaved...
 for those who have seen images they will never forget...
 for those anxiously waiting for news, despairing with each passing day...
 for young men and women, heading into combat, bearing the burden of what others have done and what they will be asked to do...
 for civilians in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank, that they would be protected and that every life would count and be cherished and remembered...
 for the wounded, and those facing a lifetime of scars, for those desperately seeking medical treatment where there is none...
 for medical and emergency personnel, risking their own lives to save those of others...
 for those who cannot see anything but rage and violence, that you would surprise them with mercy, and turn their hearts towards kindness for their fellow human beings...
 for people of peace, whose imagination is large enough to conceive of a different way, that they may speak, and act, and be heard...
 Mighty and caring God, you promised that one day, swords will be beaten into ploughshares, meet us in our distress, and bring peace upon this troubled land. Amen.



practicing his scales with an egg balanced on the back of his hand, to his career as a teacher, culminating with his appointment as headmaster of Movilla High School, where he worked hard with his staff, successfully increasing the number of pupils and their achievements until his retirement in 2022. We were pleased to welcome Yvonne to our merry band this month, and our draw was won by Etta Boyd.

See you in March ladies.

The Wednesday Club

Our January meeting was held after the Christmas break, so our ladies had plenty to share and chat about, but not until after our speaker, Margaret Moorhead, had given us a very informative talk on foot care. Margaret, a practising podiatrist, gave us advice on how to care for our feet, and recommended various ways of keeping our feet and toe nails healthy. Our winner of the draw this month was Joyce Knox.

February soon rolled around, and we were very happy to welcome our own Ian Bell as speaker this month. He gave us a very amusing account of his life, from learning the piano at the age of four and practicing his scales with an egg balanced on the back of his hand, to his career as a teacher, culminating with his appointment as headmaster of Movilla High School, where he worked hard with his staff, successfully increasing the number of pupils and their achievements until his retirement in 2022.



Sue

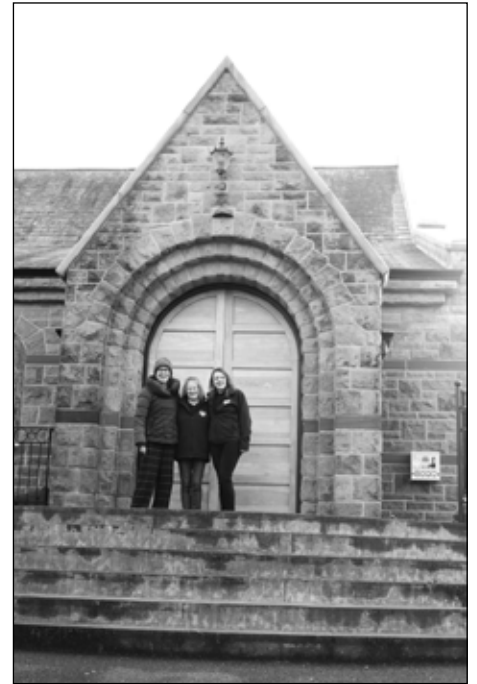
The family of the late Rosemary Thompson unveiled a defibrillator in her memory on the exterior wall of Ballyholme Church of Ireland, 68 Groomsport Road on Wednesday 13th December 2023.

A defibrillator was purchased in 2019 after fundraising by the community. The Danny Mills Heart Foundation supplied the exterior box which has now been fitted to the wall of our church.

There is still a defibrillator available in Boots when the shop is open and also inside Ballyholme Primary School.

Our thanks to the people and vestry of Ballyholme Parish, the Thompson family, Mel Martin and Boots, Love Ballyholme and the Danny Mills Heart Foundation for making this defibrillator available to everyone in Ballyholme 24/7.

Rev Jan Stevenson, Community Pastor



FUNERALS

January

22nd: Margaret McKee, formerly of College Avenue

30th: Margaret Garvin (McFettridge), formerly of Riverside Road

February

15th: Vi Feherty, formerly of Clifton Road

As Stormont finally returns to work, hopefully those long-overdue public sector pay claims will soon be settled. At least the triple-lock has kept pensions moving in the right direction. As all our bills and household costs have risen steadily recently, the church's have too. Most of us are members of some local club or other, be it sporting, social, musical, charitable or whatever. If we are, we all know that subs have gone up across the board.

New Standing Orders

Church, of course, can't increase its membership fee or quietly raise people's direct debits! Thank you then to all those who have set up new Standing Orders over this last period, to those who have increased the amount of their Standing Orders and to those who have transferred their existing Standing Orders from the Bank of Ireland to Danske Bank. We are now well into our three year transfer period, so please, if you have not already done so: stop your SOs with the Bank of Ireland and take out new ones with Danske Bank.

Danske Current Account "Parish of Ballyholme"
Sort Code 950229 Account Number 11063162

Danske Building Fund Account "Parish of Ballyholme"
Sort Code 950229 Account Number 51121367

Where do Church and God come on your list?

Suffice to say, the days of a fiver a week in the church envelope or an annual cheque for the equivalent, are completely out of step with real-world finances. Besides, proportional giving has always been the Biblical Christian way, with our free will offering to God tracking our income. So long as we remember that it's not about Paying our Keep but about giving to Proclaim God's Kingdom, open-heartedly, spontaneously and always in response to God's love for us in Christ.

Thank You Letter from Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Dear Canon Doogan

On behalf of the Ballyholme and Donaghadee Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) I would like to thank you and the congregation of St Columbanus Ballyholme for your very generous donation of toys to our Family Christmas Appeal.

The ongoing rising costs of living have significantly increased the pressures on the families we are supporting, and, as a consequence, we are responding to a greater level of poverty and disadvantage than ever before.

With your help, and that of other donors, we were able to provide help over the Christmas period to 155 families in the Bangor, Donaghadee and Millisle areas. Your generosity has ensured that people who struggle to make ends meet were able to provide a good Christmas for their families and have gifts for their children.

The consistent and generous support of the parishioners of St Columbanus Ballyholme is greatly appreciated. Please convey to all concerned our deepest gratitude for their thoughtfulness and generosity.

I hope you and the congregation of St Columbanus have a happy, healthy, and successful 2024.

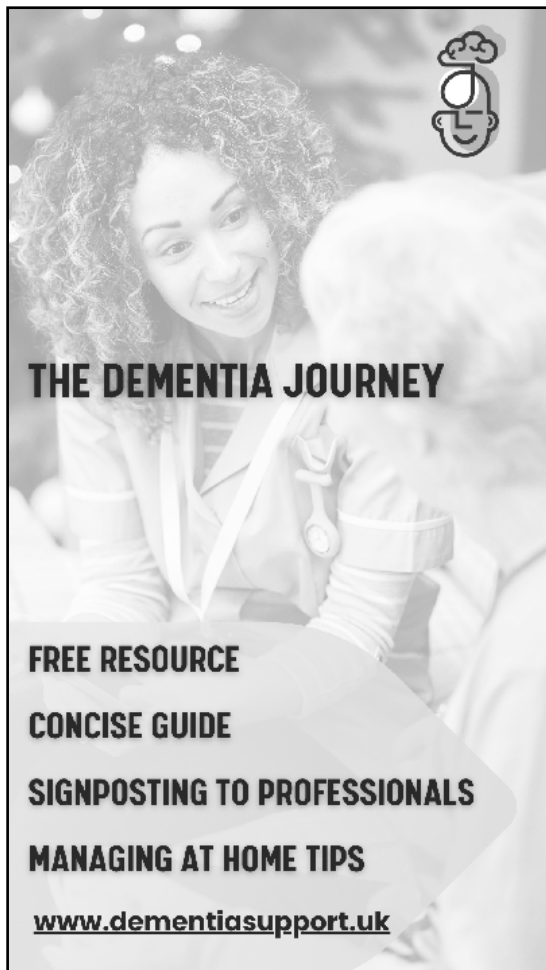
Yours sincerely

Eileen Thomson
President

I am writing to make everyone aware of a free resource describing the *Dementia Journey* in Northern Ireland. I have created a website, www.dementiasupport.uk, the contents of which is designed to help families better understand the dementia journey with a focus on the stages before a professional care setting is needed.

The website is free to use, has a downloadable printer friendly option, and includes signposting to private services available within Northern Ireland.

My reasons behind creating this resource were borne out of discussions with a close friend who was searching for guidance on how to secure a dementia diagnosis for a family member. Given my employment in the private healthcare sector (albeit the financial side), I wanted to help him, and his family get clarity on the likely stages involved in the journey.



When searching online for guidance, it really struck me just how overwhelming and untailed the information can be, particularly the lack of information on the pre-diagnosis stage and continuing to live safely at home.

So, with that being the case, I decided to do some research and in doing so I drew upon the knowledge of a local dementia expert and input from many nursing teams within the local healthcare industry. I set out to gather as much material and content as I could, and then distil it down into concise sections, with signposts for the further reading and information.

The goal was to create a valuable resource with practical application, explaining in non-medical terms, the typical journey from pre-assessment through to a professional care setting.

The website has 4 sections, **Understanding**, **Living**, **Partners & Resources**.

Understanding contains summaries of the Common Types of Dementia (there are over 100 variants), Early Warning Signs (a table showing what is likely old age and what is likely dementia symptom) and the Dementia Journey (a flow chart of the typical journey).

Living provides information regarding Managing

at Home (5 specific sub sections with tips and techniques), Medicines, Therapies and Professional Care (the process and cost).

Partners is signposting to private companies based in Northern Ireland who offer can offer bespoke advice and expertise.

Resources holds a list of websites for further reading and an option to download a printer friendly version of the entire website.

The website is not offering healthcare advice, but instead is highlighting a range of practical suggestions to help the person with dementia stay in their own home for as long as is safely possible and be better informed to plan for the future.

How dementia affects a person will be dependent on many factors, so the circumstances and the journey will be unique for each person and their family. The website will hopefully have a takeaway for everyone who may be beginning that journey or even be part way through it.

I would greatly appreciate your support by sharing the website with family and friends as I attempt to help as many people better understand the dementia journey in Northern Ireland.

Andrew Gowdy

Ballyholme Probus Club meets each Thursday from 11am to 12noon in the Ballyholme Parish Church meeting room on the Groomsport Road. Each week there is a new speaker, who gives talks on a variety of topics, and of course we do have a cup of tea/coffee and a chat.

Ballyholme Probus has been running for over 40 years, providing a place to meet for those over 60 years of age, who have retired from business or a profession.

Probus clubs were set up to provide fun and friendship in retirement. Probus provides you with the opportunity to meet fellow retirees on a regular basis, to listen to interesting speakers and join in activities, such as outings, all in the company of new friends.

Probus is not a service club and does not engage in fund raising or community sponsorship. The club is made up of members from all walks of life. It is also non-sectarian and non-political. PROBUS is an acronym for PRO (fessional) and BUS (iness) and the clubs are specifically intended for active retirees.

When you retire from business it is a complete change of lifestyle and for many it can mean the loss of work colleagues and perhaps a change of house and friends, and suddenly the world can be a lonely place. Probus can give you the opportunity to make new friends and build up a new social network. For others, perhaps their partner has died and they are living alone, with family scattered across the world. Why not come along one Thursday as our guest to see if you like it.

Loneliness can be very detrimental to one's mental health and in normal society 1 in 4 of the population suffers from a mental illness of some sort, such as depression, anxiety etc, which can become severe if left without some form of help.

As we see on television, on a daily basis, now from TV Soaps to Match of the Day, everyone is saying it is 'good to talk' so getting out of the house and making new friends is not only good for our physical health, but it is also good for our mental health.

We at Ballyholme Probus have members from many walks of life. All are retired and are aged 60 to 100 years of age, and come from all backgrounds e.g. teaching, banking, law, charities, technology and industry, so we can always find something to talk about.

If joining the club is not your thing, but you have an interesting story to tell, why don't you think about coming along as one of our speakers. We keep it all very informal and relaxed.

If you are interested in joining the club, or to come along as a speaker, please contact John Hazel (Secretary) on 0751 675 8896, or speak to any of the members who attend church each Sunday.

Don't worry if you can't come along every Thursday; perhaps you could only attend one Thursday per month. That is fine with us. Why don't you lift the phone and give us a call.





Dear fellow parishioners,

I write this article recalling one recent morning. As usual I sat quietly with what I describe as my listening prayer time. Time, I take each morning to ask God what He needs me to know and learn. Almost immediately I became overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude. Memories of all the prayers God had answered over the past 4 years came flooding back. I was able to see and feel the times I was told to wait for an answer and still I remained in fear and turmoil. Other times I was asked to look in a different direction and a lot of times I was asked to be patient. More importantly all my prayers had been answered and a recognition came to me of the power of prayer, but also the need for faith in times of real trial and despair.

I decided to suggest to Simon and Jan that we create a Gratitude Book. This would be a space to write “thank you”, to show gratitude whilst giving witness to answered prayer. Also, a place for saying what lessons we may have learnt. Gratitude is powerful, the kind word, the caring text, the thoughtful card or simply the warm smile of

appreciation is so valuable.

If as a church, we say thank you and show our gratitude to God and make it more a part of our lives. We light a beacon to the faith we have individually and as a community. The Gratitude Book can become a storehouse of our stories of how good God is.

A parishioner

(The Gratitude Book is on the table at the entrance of church, please do record answers you are grateful to God for.)

Alpha

As another Alpha course is well and truly under way, I recall January 2023, meeting up on Monday evenings in the Kajiado Room. My journey to Alpha took almost forty years, learning of it first from seeing a banner attached to the railings at St Comgall’s on the Hamilton Road. Already a worshipper at St Columbanus, my interest was piqued, noting the growing popularity of Alpha within the Parish. All those years, and much prevarication later, [what I term as spiritually ‘circling the block’] led to my eventual attendance.

What took so long? I have never been a perfect person, and was a little in awe of those whom I perceived to be pillars of the church; was I even good enough to attend the course? Like many of us, the Church featured largely in our lives. Since the age of three, I had been brought to church, then onwards via Sunday School, Confirmation preparation, and Bible class. I was a member of the Scripture Union at Friends’ School, Lisburn. This spiritual pathway will resonate with many of us.

That very first Alpha meeting in January 2023 was an eye-opener. A warm, friendly atmosphere and much to discover. One particular ‘light-bulb’ moment [and there were more] was to learn that in the library and consulting rooms of late Lord Denning, former Master of the Rolls between 1962 and 1982, the most well-thumbed book, amidst countless legal tomes, was the Holy Bible. A brilliant and much-respected legal mind had no compunction about seeking recourse from the ultimate source of unparalleled legal and moral guidance.

I learned so much over the succeeding weeks; that we all had much in common, that none of us is perfect. And we do not need to be, just basically good, kind members of our Christian family. A lifetime relationship with the Bible, and our fellow human beings, takes me back to Charlotte Elliott’s 1835 hymn, ‘Just As I Am,’ where we are given spiritual sustenance in spite of, or perhaps because of, our imperfections.

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January - Lagan Towpath from Lambeg to Lisburn

Twenty five walkers headed off by train to Lambeg and then walked along a very frosty towpath to Lisburn. After lunch the group visited the museum and Irish linen heritage centre. The highlight of the day was a demonstration of the spinning of flax into linen yarn by Olivia Kelso on a traditional spinning wheel with an interesting talk as well, Thanks to Brian for leading and to Miriam for the photos.

Betty



February - Castlewella Forest Park

Columbanus Walkers recently enjoyed a day in Castlewella Forest Park. They walked around the lake, calling at the Moorish Tower folly, and later admired the giant Sequoia which was planted in the arboretum in 1865.

Peter Gibson



Appeal for Storehouse

The trolley will be in the Church porch in the run-up to Easter for you to bring your donations on Sundays.



- Tins: meats, fish, vegetables, soups, desserts
 - Jars: baby food, jam, pasta sauce, juice, long life milk, coffee
 - Boxes: cereals, biscuits, sugar, pasta, tea bags, jellies
 - Non Food: washing-up liquid, cleaning products and other items including male and female toiletries, nappies, wipes
- As children will be off school for Easter, extra treats and Easter Eggs would be good.

YOUTH-news

youth [youth] (youths) news [nooz]

The first term of 2024 has been really great for us here at youth – as ever, we have so much to thank God for.

We've continued with our Bible studies every Tuesday and most Fridays, which have been great times of learning more about God, seeing how we live as followers of Jesus, and getting to pray for one another. The snacks are always good too, which is just the cherry on top!



Drop-in has continued at Ballyholme Presbyterian, which, it turns out, is a great place for a game of hide-and-seek! We also had a (pre-arranged) visit from the community police team at drop-in, where we got to demonstrate our hiding skills and they got to practise seeking!

Once January exam season ended, praise band got up and running again, and we led worship at Café Church in February. They always love the opportunity to do this, and it's great to see them doing so.



Emerge has been as good as ever, with plenty of discussion and learning; it's then been followed by post-church bacon for the teenagers who come to church (a time which simply gets called "bacon").

YF, then, has been great – at Junior we've been able to give our young leaders opportunities to serve, and they've been really helpful. Charlotte Gough and Chris Belshaw have both done talks this term, and we're looking forward to hearing from some of the others over the next few weeks and months.



Coming up at the time of writing is our youth weekend, and then Easter Jumpin' shortly after that, both of which we're very excited about and glad to be able to do.

Andrew

MARCH 2024**Sunday 3rd March****Lent 3**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Cafe Church - Parish Centre

11.30 Morning Prayer

Wednesday 6th March

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

Sunday 10th March**Lent 4 - Mothering Sunday**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Good News at Ten & Children's Church

11.30 Parish Communion

Wednesday 13th March

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

Sunday 17th March**Lent 5 - St Patrick's Day**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Good News at Ten Prayer & Praise Children's Church

11.30 Morning Prayer

6.30 United Service - Ballyholme Parish

Wednesday 20th March

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

Sunday 24th March**Palm Sunday**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Good News at Ten & Children's Church

11.30 Morning Prayer

Wednesday 27th March

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

Friday 29th March**Good Friday**

12 noon Good Friday at the Cross

Sunday 31st March**Easter Day**

6.30 Dawn Service at Ballymaconnell Beach

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Holy Communion

11.30 Holy Communion

APRIL 2024**Sunday 7th April****Easter 2**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.30 Cafe Church - Parish Centre

11.30 Morning Prayer

Wednesday 10th April

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

Sunday 14th April**Easter 3**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Good News at Ten & Children's Church

11.30 Parish Communion

6.30 United Service - Ballyholme Parish

Wednesday 17th April

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

Sunday 21st April**Easter 4**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Good News at Ten Prayer & Praise Children's Church

11.30 Morning Prayer

Wednesday 24th April

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

Sunday 28th April**Easter 5**

8.30 Holy Communion

10.00 Parish Communion & Children's Church

11.30 Morning Prayer

**April 2024****7th** Liz Henderson**14th** Margaret Magee**21st** Ian Bell**28th** Jane Fitzsimons

Help needed to decorate church for Easter please on Saturday 30th March.

Any offers of help and flowers will be very much appreciated.

Thank you.

March 2024**3rd** Sybil Robertson**10th** Ruth Ruttle**17th** Karen Baker**24th** Sue Bleakley**31st** Easter Sunday