

THE PARISH OF ST PETER AND ST JAMES, BELFAST

# PARISH NOTES

FEBRUARY 2023

Rector: The Rev'd Brian Lacey  
St Peter's Rectory  
17 Waterloo Park South  
Belfast BT15 5HX



*The Rector with the  
Rev'd Dr Ken Houston  
and his wife, Patricia.*

**GOD . LOVING . PEOPLE**

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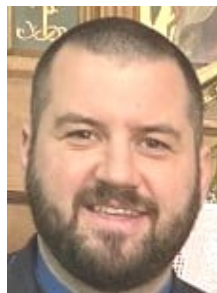


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# RECTOR'S NOTES



## SERVICES IN FEBRUARY 2023

The seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, have come to an end, and we are entering the weeks before Lent. This is the time of year when we have the oddly named “Quinquagesima”, “Sexagesima”, and “Septuagesima”, which are simply the traditional names of the first, second, and third Sundays before Lent. The liturgical colour of this Ordinary Time is green. This changes to purple for the Penitential Season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday (22<sup>nd</sup> February).

Following the Christmas break, our **10am Sunday services** will resume in February. There will be a Family Service (5<sup>th</sup> February), Holy Communion (12<sup>th</sup> February), and Morning Prayer (19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> February).

For our **11am Sunday services**, there will be Holy Communion (5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> February), Morning Prayer (12<sup>th</sup> February), and a Service of the Word (26<sup>th</sup> February).

Instead of Choral Evensong this month, there will be a special choral service of Bible readings, hymns, and anthems, to mark the end of the three seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. This “**Advent to Candlemas**” service will be at 6pm on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February.

There is only one Holy Day this month: **Ash Wednesday** (22<sup>nd</sup> February). To mark the beginning of the Season of Lent, there will be a Penitential Service for Ash Wednesday, including Holy Communion, at 10.30am on that day.

## PARISH READER TRAINING

The office of “Reader” is an ancient one within the Christian Church, although it has had something of a revival in recent times. The name refers to a person who reads the service, as opposed to a lector—who reads the Bible. In practice, this means leading non-sacramental services such as Morning or Evening Prayer. As Readers are not priests, they may not celebrate Holy Communion, pronounce the Absolution or the Blessing, nor may they baptise. Under some circumstances, however, they may conduct funerals. If we exclude Student Readers (who are essentially trainee ordained ministers) there are two types of Reader in the modern Church of Ireland. The first is the Diocesan Lay Reader, and the second is the Parish Reader. The primary differences between the two are: (1) Diocesan Lay Readers are licensed to minister anywhere in the diocese, whereas Parish Readers may only minister in their own parish; (2) Diocesan Lay Readers may lead a service as they see fit, within the rules laid down in the Book of Common Prayer, whereas Parish Readers act under the direction of their Rector; (3) Diocesan Lay Readers may preach sermons, whereas Parish Readers may not. As Diocesan Lay Readers have a broader remit, their selection process and training is more rigorous.

As with any form of ministry, nobody is born a Reader. Every current Reader once sat in the pews of a church before feeling called to lead worship. In 2017, three members of our congregation were licensed as Parish Readers: David Cromie, Forde Patterson, and the late Tony Swan. If this is something that you would like to explore as an expression of your own faith, then please speak to me. There will be a training session for Parish Readers from the local parishes at 3pm on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February in St Peter’s. If you would like to learn more about what being a Reader involves, even if only to determine whether or not you would like to pursue it further, then come along. You will be very welcome.

## **BEREAVEMENT GROUP**

Our Bereavement Group last met for six consecutive Wednesdays during the late Autumn. This was an informal group which offered participants a safe space in which to share their thoughts and feelings. Purposefully, it was not a therapy or counselling group. Although questions were asked by the facilitators (either myself or Dora Hanna), they were intended to encourage interaction and to then allow the conversation to go in whichever direction the participants felt comfortable. Sometimes there were religious comments and questions, but largely those present simply shared how their week had been in the context of their bereavement. We now intend to meet again for a further six sessions. Anyone may join, whether or not you attended previously, and regardless of how long it has been since your loved one(s) died. Please note that—given the sensitive nature of the group—new participants will not be permitted to join from the third session onwards. Therefore please do come along to the first (or at least the second) session in order to register. The dates and times will be announced shortly. If you have any questions, speak to Dora Hanna or myself.

## **NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS**

For the first time since Covid, we had a packed church for our annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols (Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December). Our choir was sublime, and their hard work and natural talent shone through. Thank you to each member, and to our excellent Organist and Choir Master, Robert Thompson (pictured). Most of the congregation were visitors from the local area, with a very wide breadth of religious affiliation. It was a delight to bring them together in St Peter's to hear the message of Christ's birth proclaimed.



## **REVIEW MEETING**

Every February, we review the list of registered members of the parish. Registering as a parishioner gives you the right to participate in the elections for our Select Vestry and other officers/representatives. The current list (which was updated in February 2022) is available for inspection on the noticeboard at the back of St Peter's.

If you are already on the list, and have made a recorded donation to parish funds in the last year, then you need do nothing further. If you are on the list, but have not made a recorded donation, then please do so in the next couple of weeks. This can be done by cash in an envelope with your name on it, or by cheque, or by bank transfer. Just make sure that Noel Beattie (our FWO Secretary) is informed and could produce a receipt for you if required. Please note that the names of existing members who have not made a recorded donation will be removed from the list. If you are not currently on the list, but have recently made—or very soon intend to make—a recorded donation to parish funds, then please fill in a registration form which can be found at the back of the church. There are two versions of the form; one is for those who live within the parish boundaries (Resident), and the other is for those who live outside the parish (Accustomed). Please fill in the appropriate form and return it to Churchwardens before the date of the Review Meeting.

The Review Meeting will be held in the Minor Hall at 7.30pm on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023. (Please note that this is not the Easter Vestry at which the elections will be held. Rather, this meeting simply updates the list of those eligible to participate in those elections at a later date.)

## **BIBLE FELLOWSHIP**

Our weekly Bible Study group resumes at 7.30pm on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February in the Minor Hall. Everyone is welcome. We meet every week except the third Thursday of each month, when the Historical Society meets instead.

## THE REV'D DR KEN HOUSTON

Our Honorary Assistant Priest, the Rev'd Dr Ken Houston (see front cover), had a milestone birthday in January, and I've asked him to share a little about his life and ministry.

*Rector:* Where does your story begin, Ken?

*Ken:* In Belfast. I was raised in the Ormeau Road area in the south of the city.

*Rector:* Did you go to church as a child?

*Ken:* Yes, I attended All Saints' (Church of Ireland) on Donegall Pass.

*Rector:* What sort of Church activities would you have been involved in, at that time?

*Ken:* I joined the Life Boys, and rose through the ranks until I was a Captain in the Boys' Brigade.

*Rector:* You became a Professor of Mathematics in later life. What led you along that career path?

*Ken:* I was always good at maths! I read Mathematics at Queen's University with the intention of becoming a teacher. I taught in various places, including a year with NASA in Maryland, USA. One thing led to another, and I ended up lecturing in Mathematics at the University of Ulster in Jordanstown until my retirement in 2006.

*Rector:* Alongside your career, what was your involvement in the Church over the years?

*Ken:* I was a Diocesan Lay Reader, and then felt called to ordination as a Non-Stipendiary Minister (NSM). This enabled me to lead worship, preach, and do some pastoral work.

*Rector:* You were ordained in 1985 in St James'. In which parishes have you ministered since then?

*Ken:* Primarily in St Andrew's, Glencairn, but I was also involved in setting up the Anglican Chaplaincy in Jordanstown.

*Rector:* What would be your favourite aspect of your ministry?

*Ken:* The teaching ministry. I've found satisfaction in teaching the Bible. Sadly, since losing my sight over the last couple of years, I have been unable to do this.

*Rector:* What happened that caused your loss of sight, and how have you been coping?

*Ken:* I had a couple of strokes in 2020. I do miss reading, but I can always listen to audio books. I often enjoy listening to music, and I enjoy chatting to visitors.

*Rector:* You had a celebration recently. Are you willing to reveal your age?

*Ken:* Yes! I turned 80, and celebrated with my wife Patricia, our three children—Mark, Kerry, and Sarah—and our family.

*Rector:* Ken, on behalf of the parish, we wish you a very happy birthday, and thank you for your ministry amongst us.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

We have had two social events in the last couple of months: Afternoon Tea (Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December) and the Children's Party (Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January). Both of these occasions went very well, and it was lovely to offer something to our local community. Of course, every event requires volunteers to make them happen, and I am immensely grateful for the willingness of those who lent a hand. This includes delivering leaflets, setting up beforehand and cleaning up afterwards, and preparing and serving food and drink. Thank you to all involved! Not least to Santa (pictured) who went out of his way to join us for Afternoon Tea at such a busy time in his schedule!



## STUDENT READER

In order to give students at the Theological Institute (which is the Church of Ireland's ministry training college in Dublin) a broader experience of Anglicanism, they are often asked to arrange a



placement with a parish which has a different liturgical style to their own home parish. As St Peter's is a broad-church, traditional, choral parish, we provide a good experience for those students who are accustomed to less formal, more contemporary expressions of worship.

In the recent past, we have been a training parish for the Rev'd Alan McCracken (Priest-in-Charge of the Moville Group of parishes in Derry & Raphoe), the Rev'd Emma Carson (Associate Minister of Magheralin Parish in Down & Dromore), and the Rev'd Nathan Ervine (Curate Assistant in St Nicholas', Carrickfergus).

When they are with us, such trainee ministers are known as "Student Readers", with a license from the Archbishop of Dublin to lead some services and to preach. I am pleased to say that we have been asked once again to broaden the liturgical experience of one such future cleric. Mr Jonny Watson (pictured) will be with us for approximately three months, during which time he will have opportunities to officiate at services, lead the prayers, read the Bible, assist with Holy Communion, and preach.



Some of you will already have met him, as he joined us for a couple of Sundays during January. You will find a short introductory article written by Jonny later in these Parish Notes. Please make him very welcome.

## **KIDS' CHURCH**

During the 10am Sunday services, children meet in the Main Hall for fun and informative activities in order to learn more about the Christian faith. I'm indebted to Cheryl Hurson for taking the lead in this vital ministry. Parents—please bring your children! Note that on the first Sunday of the month at 10am, we all remain together in the church for the Family Service.

## LOVE ONE ANOTHER

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God. And the word was God.” These words at the start of John’s Gospel are similar, aren’t they, to the very first verse in the Bible, in Genesis, chapter one: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Regardless of whether you think the creation stories in Genesis should be understood literally or metaphorically, the intention behind Genesis, chapter one, is to teach us how the world came into existence. It was not a random occurrence. Creation was a choice; the world was willed into being by God, in order to please God. And so, on each day of creation, God looks at what he has made and declares that “it is good.”

In John’s Gospel, the focus is not so much on what is being made, as it is on the one who makes it.

Indeed, the only reference to creation is, “Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made.” The emphasis here is very much on God, rather than his creation. He alone willed the universe into existence. He alone brought the universe into being. He alone sustains the universe. And yet, the focus of the Gospel’s opening verses is not God in a general sense. It is very much on—what John describes as—“the word.” “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.”

In the Greek language, in which this sentence would have been originally written nineteen hundred years ago, the word for “word” was “logos” which is transliterated as “logos”. This word “logos” can be translated in various ways. It can mean speech, oration, story, or an individual word. The general meaning is the same though: it is something which communicates an idea from one person to another. But what is John, in his Gospel, trying to explain by declaring that this “word”, (this means of communication) was in the beginning, and—more fundamentally—that this “word” was God? What is this word?

Well, a few verses into John's Gospel, and we hear this: "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." Now, given that the gospels are all about Jesus, it should not be too difficult to recognise that John is describing Jesus as "the word." So, to paraphrase John: "Jesus became flesh (that is, he took on human form) and lived among us." But why call him "the word"?

Let's leave that for a second, and jump ahead in John's Gospel to chapter fourteen. This is when Jesus was comforting his disciples that after he had died, he would send them the Holy Spirit. Listen to what he says: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will be with you for ever." That other Advocate would be the Holy Spirit, but the implication (given by the word "another") is that Jesus himself is an Advocate.

The Greek word is "paracleton"—which is why you will sometimes hear the Holy Spirit referred to as "the paraclete". But that Greek word literally means "someone who is invited to stand beside you."

And it usually referred to the person you would bring with you to legal proceedings; they were there to support you, to comfort you, and, perhaps more importantly, to speak on your behalf. That's why we translate it as "Advocate." That comes from the Latin words "Ad vocare", meaning, "to speak to someone." So, in John chapter fourteen, Jesus is—in almost a throwaway comment—describing himself as one who speaks on behalf of someone else. And who is it that Jesus speaks on behalf of? Well, that must, of course, be God the Father.

Let's jump back to John chapter one. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." If we accept that "the word" is a reference to Jesus, then we could re-phrase this as: "In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God." Now, there are Christological problems with putting it as bluntly as that, but for our purposes it'll do fine. Because what John wants us to understand is that Jesus of Nazareth is God.

But that still leaves us pondering why John calls him “the word”? Well, it all has to do with how Jesus referred to himself as “the one who speaks on behalf of another.” But John is stating that Jesus is more than a messenger from God. Jesus is, in fact, the living embodiment of that message. And, if you want to frazzle your brain even a little more, he is also the God who wrote the message.

The big question you should be asking is, “what is that message?” What is it that is being communicated from God the Father, through Jesus, to us? The answer, communicated through all of the Scripture, through the words of Jesus two thousand years ago, and exemplified by his lifestyle, and his death, is simple. The message is: “Love one another.” Because God is love.

## *Men's Breakfast*

OK chaps, now that Christmas is long over, the diet you were encouraged to start has begun to flag and a bowl of muesli with skimmed milk has lost its appeal, St Peter's is proud to announce a resolution for all your dietary needs. Yes, it's the Men's Breakfast, coming to wreck your digestive system on **Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> March** at the minor hall. Last time we had a grand turn-out including our youngest diner ever. Certain issues touched on in our November discussions remain unresolved: the future of Anglicanism; the degree to which Fermanagh is much, much nicer than Tyrone (it is); the joys of Ulster rugby and what should be done about lawyers! Everyone possessing the XY chromosome is welcome.

Please confirm your intention to join us by contacting me on: [davidcromie@stpeterbelfast.org](mailto:davidcromie@stpeterbelfast.org).



# PARISH REGISTER

*Christian Burial*

*"At rest in the Lord."*

*Enid Saunderson*

*Burial at Carnmoney Cemetery*

*on 13th January 2023*

## JONNY WATSON

Hello, my name is Jonny. I live in the south side of Belfast near Forestside with my wife Lisette, two busy daughters Rosa (8) and Cara (4) and Sparky (our big, grey cat). Our home church is the Church of the Transfiguration, Belvoir Parish, where we are all involved. I am currently in second year at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, training for ordained ministry. My time with you will be an opportunity to continue to explore this call, as well as learn from the Rector and from you, the congregation.

I am training part-time, which means that I do a significant proportion of my studies by way of distance-learning and attend classes and formation in Dublin one weekend in each month. This blended approach enables me to balance a busy home life alongside study.

I used to work as a social worker in children's services in SE and Belfast Trust. After having children, Lisette and I decided that I would take care of our children full-time. I studied Christian Spirituality in 2014-15 at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth and am very interested in Ignatian Spirituality. Alongside being a PA and chauffeur for our daughters, I am a Spiritual Director and teach on a number of Spirituality Programmes. When I get some rare time to myself, my interests include photography, hill-walking, reading and watching rugby.

Thank you for your warm welcome to the Parish of St Peter and St James. I look forward to getting to know you all better over the coming months.

## Prayer

If you would like your name added to our prayer list please get in touch with Rosemary Johnston or Daphne McClements.

Contact details on back cover.



## North Belfast Historical Society

**Date:** Thursday 16th February

**Time:** 7.30pm

**Where:** Minor Hall

**Subject:** Historical Cave Hill

**Speaker:** Cormac Hamill



*Everyone is very welcome to come along to what promises to be a very interesting evening.*

*Daphne McClements, Chairman*

## PARISHIONER CONTACT DETAILS

For speed of communication and to keep our records up to date, please send your email address to the Parish Office at:

[annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org](mailto:annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org)

Also, please don't forget to let us know if you move house, change any of your telephone numbers, or your email addresses. Thank you.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

to those with birthdays in February:

Michelle Cole, Hilda Sherwood and Janice Knowles

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

*If you would like to add your name to our birthday board, you'll find it on the notice board at the back of the church, alternatively, you can ask Anne, our Parish Administrator, to add it for you.*

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY	OFFICIANT	PREACHER	LECTOR	INTERCESSOR
<b>WEDNESDAY 1ST FEBRUARY (GREEN)</b>				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	-	Rosemary Johnston
<b>SUNDAY 5TH FEBRUARY (GREEN) - SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY</b>				
10am Family Service	Rector	Rector	Cal Hurson	Henry George
11am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	David Cromie	David Cromie
6pm Lessons and Carols	David Cromie	-	Multiple	-
<b>WEDNESDAY 8TH FEBRUARY (GREEN)</b>				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	-	Timothy Wilson
<b>SUNDAY 12TH FEBRUARY (GREEN) - SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY</b>				
10am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	-	Daphne McClements
11am Morning Prayer	Rector	Rector	Dora Hanna	Dora Hanna
<b>WEDNESDAY 15TH FEBRUARY (GREEN)</b>				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	-	Daphne McClements
<b>SUNDAY 19TH FEBRUARY (GREEN) - QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY</b>				
10am Morning Prayer	David Cromie	David Cromie	Dora Hanna	David Cromie
11am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Jonny Watson	Jonny Watson
<b>WEDNESDAY 22ND FEBRUARY (PURPLE) - ASH WEDNESDAY</b>				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Daphne McClements	Rector
<b>SUNDAY 26TH FEBRUARY (PURPLE) - THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT</b>				
10am Morning Prayer	Jonny Watson	Rector	Quintin Mulligan	Jonny Watson
11am Service of the Word	Rector	Rector	Jonny Watson	David Cromie

# Still on the banks of the Dnieper

*David Cromie*

The twenty-fourth day of this month will be the anniversary of the start of Mr Putin's two week "special military operation". It has not gone to plan, and with the better part of a quarter of a million deaths so far and no end to the tragedy in sight, we might well ask ourselves where do we go from here? I say 'we' intentionally, for this affects us directly, as Europeans, as human beings, as Christians. We fervently pray for peace, for love and compassion among the nations, even for a degree of humanity (whatever that means), but it seems our prayers are not having much effect. Are they even being heard?

The answer is yes, of course they are; but just because we ask for something, even something as basic as peace, we must understand that God is not obliged to deliver it, and certainly not to deliver it in the form we desire. The churches resounded with earnest prayers for peace in 1914 and again in 1939, yet it took years and millions of lives for peace finally to arrive. Men start wars, and men finish them, and God will be the judge of their actions in the fullness of time.

In my study, perched on a speaker, is a photograph of a little Ukrainian girl we have been sponsoring for a number of years, smiling at the camera, giving a thumbs-up while hugging Peter Rabbit. She lives near Lviv and her life has never been a bed of roses. Today an autocrat fires missiles at her and people like her, and if he kills her, her death, which would cause those who love her so much pain, would, I suspect, be regarded as just another piece of collateral damage in the Kremlin. Yet for every Ukrainian killed, maimed or forced to flee, there is also a Russian, killed, maimed or silenced. For every Ukrainian tear shed for a lost friend or relative, there is a Russian one too. The true irony of war is that it never settles anything, it just breeds new conflicts.



I remember a book I read in school about the First World War. In it was a cartoon from 1916, which showed the Kaiser standing on a pile of corpses looking through a telescope and saying “Make the pile higher, I still can’t see Verdun.” Reading about the crude Russian tactics and the vast losses both sides have been suffering at places like Bakhmut, Kremmina and Soledar, one might well ask, don’t we ever learn? No, clearly we don’t. Lord Wellington put the reality of war rather well when, after riding around the corpse-strewn battlefield of Waterloo, he said ‘... nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won ...’.

War is part of what it is to be human, and we are capable of terrible things; but we are also just as capable of good ones such as love, generosity and self-sacrifice. Jesus, who knew all about the dark side of humanity, rated self-sacrifice as the greatest human trait: “Greater love has no man than this, to lay down his life for his friends.” When he might have encouraged insurrection and turned the Middle-East red with the fire of rebellion against the Romans, instead he gave his own life, so that we could see, in all its crimson reality, the extent of his love and understanding, and that he would go through the very gates of death to save us. For all our flaws, this is how we are loved, all of us, each of us, wherever we live, whatever we are.

Jesus told us that we must love our neighbour as ourselves—Roman or Jew, Ukrainian or Russian. This is not an invitation merely to be a nice person; it is a command to overturn our natural inclinations and actively live out our Christianity—showing love and kindness to all, seeking peace and justice and never stopping—however long this war might last.



CHURCH OF IRELAND

# GAZETTE

Should anyone be interested in receiving the Church of Ireland Gazette, please contact Ashlee McCune or Anne Cromie. There are historical as well as up-to-date articles, discussions, news etc and you will receive ten gazettes over the twelve months. The annual cost is £40.

*Margi Crawford*

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## FLOWERS IN CHURCH

The Flower List for 2023 is now open for bookings. Please contact Anne Cromie in the Parish Office (contact details on back cover) if you would like to book a Sunday in this coming year. You may wish to donate flowers to mark a particular occasion; perhaps a wedding anniversary, the birth of a child or grandchild, to remember the death of a family member, or indeed as an act of thanksgiving for some notable blessing. All such donors will be acknowledged in the Parish Notes.



We deeply appreciate all who contribute flowers Sunday by Sunday and also all those who devote so much time and energy in arranging them and looking after them mid-week.

If you require assistance with floral arrangements, Sandra Davison is on hand to help—her contact details are also on the back cover.

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## PAUSE FOR THOUGHT AND PRAYER

by Rosemary Johnston

### *Freedom to Worship—or not ...*

In many countries around the world there are many Christians subjected to torture, persecution, rape and murder because of their faith. It must take a lot of courage to go to church where there is such danger. We are so blessed in our own country. Yes, we can fight bitterly and often religion is part of the problem and also part of the solution, but we are free to go to church; there are no state police or (seldom) gangs to threaten us. At the moment with the crisis in the NHS many people are dubious about mixing in public places, and with a lot of infection about, they feel safer at home. As things improve, and the weather is not so cold and the danger of frost passes, we look forward to seeing our fellow parishioners back with us. May you improve in health if you have been ill and may you keep safe and warm. Any one who has not been to church for a while and isn't sure how they will be received needn't worry as they will be sure of a warm welcome. I know that I need to be in church among my fellow parishioners, for as long as I am able, to confess my sins, to be forgiven, to 'walk in the newness of life', to praise and worship God; and also to gain learning and understanding from the readings and the sermon. Jesus died for us all, for love of us all. When I fail him, which is all too often, I know he will forgive me and welcome me back with unconditional love—as the hymn says "There's a wideness in God's mercy". I cannot worship God on my own. I need the fellowship, guidance and support of those around me. I also know that it is never too late to turn to Jesus, for he said so in the parable about the workers being paid the same wages no matter when they were hired. So no one need ever feel they would be rejected.

*Heavenly Father, we know that Jesus will come again  
in all his glorious majesty—we don't know when,  
but I pray that we are all ready when that time comes. Amen.*

# The Parish Choir

*Robert Thompson*

December is always a very busy month for church musicians and, for the Parish Choir, December 2022 was no exception to that rule. On Monday 5<sup>th</sup> we journeyed out to the beautiful little parish church of St. John's, Donegore, to present a concert of music and readings for Advent and Christmas. We were welcomed by a capacity audience which was just wonderful and it was lovely to see the faces of some St Peter's parishioners who had come along to support us. Highlights of the evening included performing two new pieces ... a new harmonisation of *Away in a Manger* and an exciting setting of the *Coventry Carol* ... by one of our own choir members, Rory Douglas-Smith and giving the first performance in Northern Ireland of Jack Wilson's atmospheric setting of *In the bleak midwinter*. The audience were entertained with seasonal readings from Anne Stewart and Clodagh Webb and it was a joy to have the talented Phillip Elliott to accompany us on organ and piano. We were treated to the most fabulous supper afterwards ... thanks to the lovely folk of Donegore for making us so welcome and entertaining us so royally!

On December 19<sup>th</sup> we had our own traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols in St. Peter's. Again we were thrilled to see the church packed with parishioners and visitors from the local community. This service is one of the highlights of the choir year and one that really gets us in the mood for Christmas. Again we were so lucky to have Phillip Elliott with us. The evening was rounded off with mulled wine and mince pies and it was great to get a chance to chat to the many visitors to the church ... hopefully we will see them back with us soon. The last big service for the choir was Midnight Eucharist on Christmas Eve ... my favourite service of the year and I have to say how grateful I am to have the support of such a wonderful group of very loyal and very talented musicians to work alongside, not only at special services but week by week!

I know I have appealed to you to come along to the evening services which involve the choir and it has been very much appreciated that congregations at our last few Choral Evensongs have been growing. On that note, can I encourage you to come to our Advent to Candlemas service at **6pm on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February**. This will be the first time we have been able to have this service in the evening since the pandemic and we intend to make it extra special by having lots of candles in the church for the occasion. It's a lovely opportunity to look back at Advent, Christmas, Holy Innocents, Epiphany and the Presentation of Christ in the Temple before starting to look ahead to Lent and Easter. We will be joined by the very talented organist Tristan Russher who, as well as accompanying the choir, will be playing some great Candlemas organ music before the service and, no doubt, something thrilling at the end. Please put it in your diary!

## *Advent to Candlemas*

### *Sunday 5th February 6pm*



*A beautiful service  
by candlelight  
with readings and music  
taking us from Advent to  
The Presentation of Christ.  
Sung by the parish choir.*

*Choirmaster: Robert Thompson  
Organist: Tristan Russcher*

*Please make a special effort to  
invite your friends and  
family to come along.*



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please contact the Parish Administrator, Anne Cromie.  
Contact details on back cover.**

## FLOWER LIST FOR FEBRUARY

- 5TH VIVIEN CLARKE IN MEMORY OF HER MOTHER  
26TH CAROLYN HILDITCH IN MEMORY OF HER MOTHER

Thank you to all who give of their time and effort in beautifying the church with flowers. If practicable, flowers should be in keeping with the liturgical colour of the season, particularly during Advent and Lent.



**Please send material for the March issue of Parish Notes to:  
Anne Cromie, Parish Administrator, St Peter's Church,  
Fortwilliam Drive, Belfast BT15 4EB  
or email: [annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org](mailto:annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org)  
by Monday 20th February. Thank you.**

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