

Eagle Wing



The Magazine of Groomsport Presbyterian Church

Christmas 2017

The Eagle Wing was the first emigrant ship to leave Ulster for America. She sailed from Groomsport in September 1636, carrying 140 Presbyterians in search of a life free from persecution in the New World. Fearful weather, however, forced them to return home after two months at sea. Although she did not reach her destination, the *Eagle Wing* became the inspiration for others to make their attempts and since those days, several million people have left our shores, taking with them their culture and traditions. These cultural links with America are celebrated each year at the North Down Eagle Wing Festival in July.

Our church magazine takes its title from this significant piece of local history. In 2002, Jennifer Hulme, a member of the congregation and well known local artist, created the cover design, which strikingly depicts the symbols of the wing, sail and cross.

We seek to be a welcoming community of God's people

*We believe our mission is to hear and share His Word and
to reflect God's unconditional love - as we proclaim
and celebrate the good news of Jesus Christ
and strive to be a welcoming, serving and reconciling
community."*



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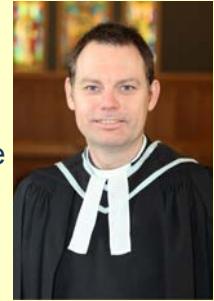
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Visit our website www.groomsportpc.com

LETTER FROM THE MANSE

Some people, like my wife, Catherine, just love it and get so excited as Christmas approaches. They have never really lost the wonderful, child-like innocence of it all – they can't wait for the decorations to go up, the music to start playing and the anticipation of the big day itself, spent with family and friends.



For others, it's one of the toughest times of the year. Pressures from various imposed expectations, memories of loved ones no longer with them, broken relationships and loneliness - all take their toll. And Christmas is the hardest time to be alone.

For those of us who go to church, Christmas is often the time when we hear sermon after sermon, reminding us not to take Christ out of CHRISTMaS, or all we'll be left with is M&S.

Personally, I love M&S at Christmas - so many goodies to enjoy! That said, as your new minister, I know you would expect nothing less of me than to highlight the need for Christ at Christmas, and indeed for life!

When you attend the special Christmas services, please listen out for the reason why Jesus came into the world. Matthew, in his gospel, at the outset states that Jesus came into the world to "save his people from their sin". The hymn writer put it this way:

*God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay!
for Jesus Christ our Saviour
was born on Christmas Day,
to save us all from Satan's power
when we had gone astray:
O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy;
O tidings of comfort and joy!*

The Lord Jesus put it this way: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

I trust you are able to enjoy the Christmas season, knowing that Jesus wants us to enjoy the life that he has given to us. That, in fact, he wants us to have more than just an ordinary life, he wants us to have a life that is overflowing with joy and goodness. So, please come along to the special services and enjoy the opportunities to worship and praise God for the gift of his Son.

O yes, and also enjoy M&S goodies and don't forget to say thank you to God, "who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." (1 Timothy 6:17).

Happy Christmas!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul".

CONGREGATIONAL RECORD



DEATHS

26 September 2017 Mrs Sheila McAlister, Clandeboye Care Home (25)
10 October 2017 Miss Anne Groves, Kingsland Care Home (15)
24 October 2017 Mr Raymond Gregg, Richmond Lodge (28)
29 October 2017 Mr Martin McClements, Croagh Patrick Home (1)
08 November 2017 Mrs Mary Russell, 136 Crawfordsburn Road (27)

"Blessed are they who die in the Lord"

God has the last word on death. And if you listen, He will tell you the truth about your loved ones. They've been dismissed from the hospital called Earth. You and I still roam the halls, smell the medicines. They, meanwhile, inhale springtime.

You miss them like crazy, but can you deny the truth? They have no pain, doubt, or struggle. They really are happier in heaven. Reunion is a splinter of an eternal moment away. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 says that there is no need for you "to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope."

God understands. He knows the sorrow of a grave. He buried His Son. But He also knows the joy of resurrection. And by His power, you will too.

Max Lucado *Facing your Giants*

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EDITORIAL

Home, family, gifts – these are important elements of Christmas preparation and anticipation. The Groomsport Presbyterian family is an ever-expanding network of people around the world, who have perhaps moved away, or who have returned to a far-off home, having shared our congregational life for a time. It's always good to hear from our former Princeton interns, each of whom has – in his or her own way – become firmly established as 'one of our own'. In addition to news from some of these friends, we have a report from Paul's recent trip to Princeton, when our continuing connection with the Theological Seminary was confirmed. We look forward to welcoming a new member of our global family when Ryan joins us next year. Meanwhile, Denis Campbell has been tracing some of the footsteps of St Paul, in Greece; Adam Steele is preparing for his Raleigh International trip in the new year, and Maureen Campbell has sent a family update from the United Arab Emirates. Further links exist with the community and church family in Knysna, and Hazel and Stanley Megahey tell of the devastating fires in that area of South Africa earlier in the year.

Some older people begin to feel the need for a home with fewer responsibilities, while wishing to retain a level of independence. Such accommodation is provided in our area by Abbeyfield and Wesley, which recently opened a new and beautifully refurbished house on Hamilton Road. In response to information received from the local organisation, we are including in this issue a short note on its very worthwhile work, and an open invitation to a forthcoming Christmas coffee morning in Donaghadee.

If you're looking for gift ideas with a local flavour, Brian McClelland critiques the Belfast novels of Brian Moore, while The Leprosy Mission offers an opportunity to give more unusual 'gifts for life'. Don't forget to support the Sunday School Gift Day service, which every year sends much appreciated items to needy families. With presents arriving in our homes at this time of year, there is always the corresponding requirement to find space for them, so Margaret Johnston's article on de-cluttering is timely! And it's not just physical sorting and clearing out that is recommended; Christmas is truly a time when we need to de-clutter our minds, ditch what Rabbi Abraham Heschel calls "the profanity of clattering commerce," and figure out priorities. Our candlelit Carol Service is, for many, the start of their festive celebrations, focusing on the best ever gift – a child in a manger, freely given to all and uniting people everywhere. Like the Grinch, we might start to think that *maybe Christmas... doesn't come from a store*. In the midst of the annual shopping frenzy, whether online or on the high street, as we search for just the right gifts, we should stop and allow ourselves to realise that, actually, the perfect present – from above – has already been delivered.

*Wishing all Eagle Wing readers a very
Happy Christmas and New Year.*

News from Princeton... Paul Dalzell

Catherine and I arrived in Princeton on Monday evening 13th November and work commenced at 7.30am on Tuesday morning. It was a very busy week but extremely encouraging. As 2018-19 will be my first time supervising an intern, Princeton Theological Seminary required that I completed an 'Orientation Course'. These lectures were given by Rev. Dr. Chester Polk and lasted some eight hours. Tuesday included orientation lectures, meeting with different members of staff and faculty members, including Dr Craig Barnes (President) who sends his greetings. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, along with orientation, included interviewing fourteen candidates. Saturday was a time of rest and reflection, having informed the Princeton Field Education Department (the office that oversees interns' work) that I was interested in offering the post to Mr Ryan Pearce, and arranging to meet with him on Monday morning before heading home that afternoon.

As you will see from the photos, the week also afforded opportunities to meet up with past Groomsport interns and their families.

Most of the week, the sun shone and it was always a pleasure to walk through the campus. This is the Miller Chapel, in which we were able to attend 'prayers' on two occasions - one service (20 minutes) conducted by students and the other service conducted by the student choir.



After orientation lectures and visiting staff and faculty members, on Tuesday evening we met with Rev Chris Miller, Mary Erin and David, who happened to be visiting in Princeton that week. After a lovely meal together, we spent a short time getting some necessary groceries. David (now 20 months old) loved being wheeled around the supermarket!



On the Thursday evening, the Seminary was holding a Field Education information



evening. This was an opportunity for local churches, who were seeking an intern for 2018-19, to promote their church and the opportunities for students in their congregation. Rev. Ryan Irmer was there, with a stand promoting Slackwood Presbyterian Church in Lawrenceville, NJ. It was good to meet Ryan again, having met him briefly in Groomsport last April. Ryan arranged for

us to visit his church on the Sunday, where we enjoyed morning worship followed by a congregational 'pot luck' fellowship lunch. It was lovely to spend some time with Ryan, Amelia and Alison and to meet members of Ryan's church. Alison (now aged 9) and little Colette (member of the congregation, aged 4) collected the offering.



The selected candidate to intern at Groomsport 2018-19 is Mr Ryan Pearce, aged 24, who comes from the Bay Area in California. Ryan completed his Bachelor's in Neuroscience at Washington State University, originally planning to attend medical school. However, sensing a call from God to ministry, he spent one year in 'college ministry' at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, before commencing studies at Princeton. Ryan is now in his second year and will return, after his time in Groomsport, to Princeton to complete his MDiv. We look forward to welcoming Ryan next September.



SUNDAY SCHOOL continues to meet each week in the Walter Nelson Hall at 10.15 am. We may be small in number, but we are full of enthusiasm as we enjoy craftwork, games - and occasionally even baking. All these activities are based on the Bible story of the day.

At present, we are practising for the CHRISTMAS GIFT DAY service to be celebrated on 10th December at 11.30 am in the church. At this service, the children will leave gifts under the Christmas tree, and these will then be taken to the Belfast Central Mission for distribution to needy families. Our children, from both Sunday School and Bible Class, will lead this service that marks the beginning of our Christmas celebrations. Please show your love and encouragement to the children and young people by your presence on that special day.

Sunday 17th December will be another special day, when we will have a short carol service at our usual Sunday School time. We hope that SANTA CLAUS will be able to find the time to pay us a visit. Parents and friends are invited to join us and there will be tea, coffee and shortbread for adults, and juice and biscuits for the children before the church service at 11.30.

There will be no Sunday School on 24th and 31st.
We will resume on 7th January.

Please uphold the work of the Sunday School and Bible Class and encourage more children and young people to join us.

Margaret McCready, Superintendent
Tel 9146 4361



**The Leprosy
Mission
Northern Ireland**

COFFEE MORNING 11th November 2017

Thank you to all who came, helped and supported our Leprosy Mission Coffee Morning. We had a wonderful morning of chat, coffee, scones and tray bakes and



Photograph courtesy of *County Down Spectator*

in the midst of a busy morning, we paused at 11 o'clock for a minute's silence for Remembrance Day.

Thank you to Peter Hilton from The Leprosy Mission and his daughters, Lydia and Eva, for coming along and bringing the 'shop' of Christmas cards and stocking fillers - their sales totalled £209.00. This, together with donations of £590.00, meant that we raised an amazing £799.00.



Gifts for Life

The Leprosy Mission Gifts for Life make memorable and unique Christmas, birthday and anniversary gifts.

Leprosy is a unique disease because of the age-old stigma which continues to shroud it in parts of the world today. It is most common in places of poverty, with dirty water and poor sanitation contributing to the weakening of the body, leaving it unable to fight the disease.

Gifts for Life are an amazing way of giving a gift to a loved one which, in turn, makes a lasting difference to someone battling with the effects of leprosy and poverty. The Gift for Life catalogue contains a range of gifts which are directly linked to the projects where they are needed most, meaning every penny will benefit a life blighted by Leprosy.



Catalogues are available from the church vestibule and more information can be obtained from www.tlm-ni.org

Stephanie McCready, Leprosy Mission Secretary, 02891478482



GET SORTED by Margaret Johnston

One evening many years ago, our family was enjoying a quiet meal, under a starlit sky, at a Greek tavern in Cyprus. Suddenly, the peace was disturbed by another group, as a loud voice proclaimed, "But there are lots of things we are NOT taking home from holiday, like Daddy's old swimming trunks!"

It was easy to imagine how the conversation had reached this point. The children were keen to keep their shells, seaweed, buckets and spades, and this was not a welcome idea.

After our family cruise on a small yacht, where lack of space prevents clutter accumulating, I had decided to have a good 'clear-out' when I returned home. I needed to throw away mountains of old photos, magazines and papers, for example – and that was only a start!



Unfortunately, like many of my resolutions, the urge to carry my resolve failed. I have never reached the stage where real tidiness prevails. However, on September 25th, at our opening meeting of PW, the subject matter forced me to think again. *Get Sorted* was Gwen's fun talk on 'de-cluttering'. It was amusing, entertaining and thought-provoking, as she recalled several episodes of her life. "But," she said, "not only objects can become clutter – old habits and ideas need sorting, too."

The best way to reconstruct our lives is with God's help. I have recently re-read Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, verse 8 – how we should fill our minds with all that is good, true, noble, right, pure and honourable.

When we ask God to guide our thoughts and actions, to discriminate, and value what we have in His eyes, then we are close to ridding our lives of useless clutter which can obscure the things of precious worth.

WHATEVER IS *true*,
WHATEVER IS *honorable*,
WHATEVER IS *just*,
WHATEVER IS *pure*...
IF THERE IS ANYTHING
worthy of praise,
THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS.

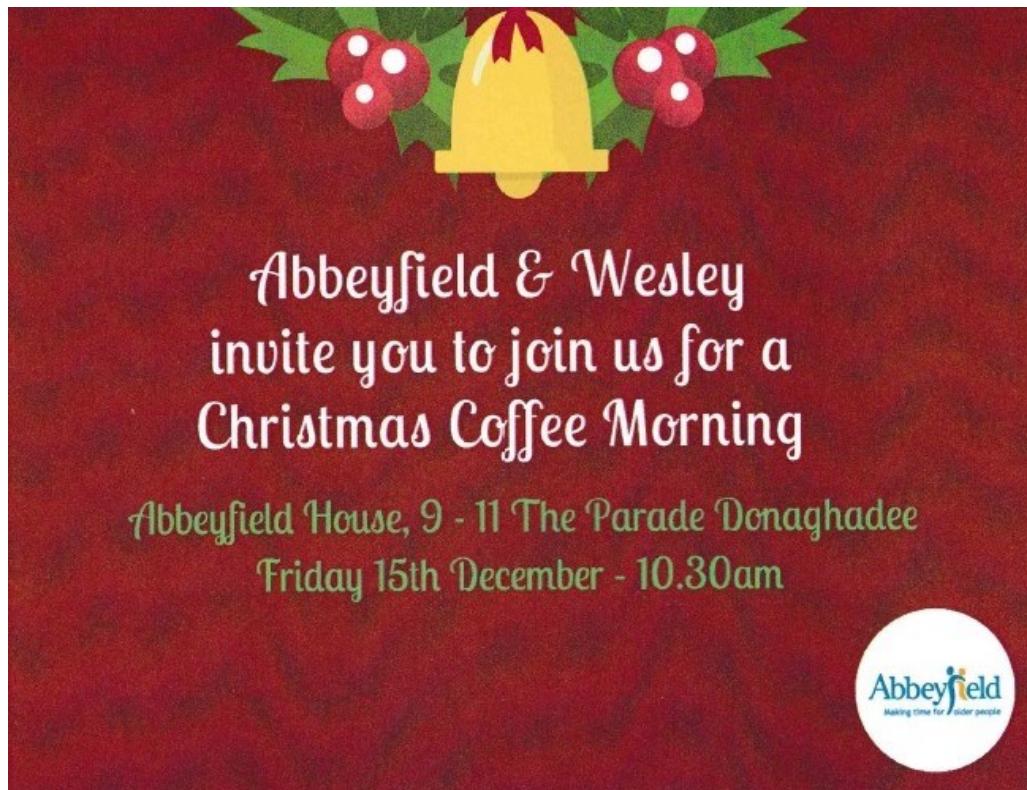
PHILIPPIANS 4:8, NRSV

ABBEYFIELD & WESLEY - SUPPORTED, SHELTERED HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE -

The newest house acquired by Abbeyfield and Wesley in this area was opened recently by Lady Sylvia Hermon at a day of special celebration for staff and residents. Number 111 Hamilton Road is a beautifully appointed home, within easy walking distance of the town. This type of accommodation is perfect for those who feel that they no longer need the worry of looking after a house and all that that entails, but who still want a level of independence and the freedom to come and go as they please. Home cooked meals are provided, freshly prepared every day, and residents can enjoy both the company of others in the communal areas and the privacy of their own secure bedsits.

For further information, contact Steven Brennan, Area Manager:
02891478637 sbrennan@abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk
www.abbeyfieldandwesley.org.uk

You will also be welcome to attend the coffee morning coming up soon in Donaghadee.



ONE OF THOSE WANDERERS: The Belfast novels of Brian Moore

By Brian McClelland

A few months ago in *Eagle Wing* (likely more than a few!), Rev Derek Drysdale eulogized the writing of novelist, PG Wodehouse. I am not a fan of this most English of authors. Writer Alan Bennett is frank in his criticism of Wodehouse when he says, “inspired though his language is, I can never take more than ten pages of the novels at a time, their relentless flippancy is wearing and tedious.” Well said, sir! No, Wodehouse is certainly not my cuppa, though I have nothing against those who admire him, especially someone who is a former McQuiston minister.

McQuiston Memorial is a huge Presbyterian Church on the Castlereagh Road in Belfast, dating from 1892. In the 1960s, McQuiston had a membership of over 1,500 families, making it the largest in the General Assembly. I was born in one of those trim terrace houses that were once adjacent to the church. Indeed, according to my big sister (she’s ninety now), for I have little recollection of the occasion, I was also baptised at home.

Thankfully, during the war years and after – those years of hardship and austerity, of Mickey Mouse gas masks and sweetie coupons – we had a somewhat eccentric, yet compassionate, minister at McQuiston in the formidable Dr J.B. McIlroy, who put his flock first, and for whom red tape, in the form of rules and regulations, was just so much waste paper.



One of my fondest memories of McQuiston is as a nine-year-old Life Boy member, standing on a box, nervously reading the scripture lesson from its cavernous pulpit at a Boys’ Brigade enrolment service. Nearly twenty years later, I would be ordained an elder in the same church.

I have gone off topic somewhat, I know, but Wodehouse and the Rev Derek must shoulder some responsibility! Actually, I have not quite lost the run of myself, for Belfast is the link, and I was about to say: give me a gritty Belfast writer – such as Brian Moore – any day, over a flippant Englishman. Sorry, Derek!

Born in Belfast in 1921, Brian Moore was the second son in a doctor’s family of nine children. He was raised in an atmosphere of conservative Catholicism, mixed with staunch nationalism. His mother was a native Irish speaker from Donegal. Moore attended St Malachy’s College, Belfast, later immortalised in *The Feast of Lupercal* (1957), a story centred on a teacher’s sexual ineptitude and the author’s case against the role of the Church in education.

The novelist’s father was born in 1867 in Ballymena. On his father’s maternal side were the O’Raws, an old Catholic family who had fought in the 1798 Rising and, according to Moore himself, lost their lands because they would not change their religion. The first Catholic to be elected to the Senate of Queen’s University, Dr Moore was highly successful. In time, he became the head surgeon of the Mater Hospital, just a short distance from his Belfast home.

By the age of twenty, Brian Moore knew that medicine was not for him. As a civilian, he served with the British Ministry of War Transport and developed his father’s strongly anti-British sentiments. At the end of the war, he worked with the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration mission in Warsaw. Moore followed a girlfriend to Canada in 1948, only to suffer a bout of unrequited love, thankfully not fatal in this instance. He remained in Canada, however, becoming a Canadian citizen and eventually landing a job as a reporter with the *Montreal Gazette*. Becoming famous and wealthy, Moore bought a house in Malibu, California (and why not?!), where he lived with his second wife, Jean, until his death in 1999.

The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne (1956), Moore's first book, was told from the viewpoint of a woman. Judith Hearne was a lonely spinster with a drink problem, living in Belfast's bed-sit land. His initial idea for *Judith Hearne* was to explore his own youthful loss of faith by projecting the experience onto a non-intellectual, middle-aged woman. This automatically drew him back to his own home and to his Catholic experience. He wrote about Belfast, not about the Belfast of the day, but the Belfast of his past, which ensured that an autobiographical feeling would colour the world of Judith Hearne.

The house of the O'Neills, which Judith Hearne visits on Sunday afternoons, is a version of Brian Moore's own childhood home on Clifton Street, just off Carlisle Circus in Belfast. Adjacent to the old graveyard, it was a four-storey, semi-detached house on the street side, in which his father had a surgery on the ground floor. It was a decidedly middle-class Catholic home, which provided a secure view of the Central Orange Hall of Belfast, crowned with a statue of King Billy on his white charger, across the street. Despite a public campaign, efforts to preserve the Moore family home failed and it was demolished in 1996. A few hundred yards away, up the Antrim Road, is St Malachy's College, the secondary school of both Brian Moore and his father, and immortalised in *The Feast of Lupercal*.

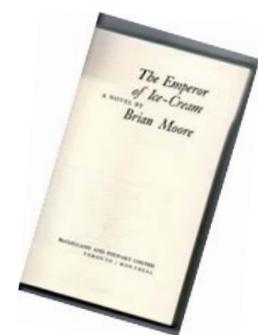
It was in the writing of his first novel, that Moore discovered his bitterness against the Catholic Church, his bitterness against bigotry in Northern Ireland, and his feeling about the narrowness of life there. It was an attempt, as he later admitted "to write Belfast out of my system". Moore's treatment of the Church resulted in *Judith Hearne* being banned for indecency by the Censorship Board of the Republic of Ireland in 1955.

That his years at St Malachy's were unhappy ones is evident in how frequently Moore returns to speak of the caning and the repressive Catholic atmosphere. In his second novel, *The Feast of Lupercal*, Moore tells the story of the sexually inept Diarmuid Devine, a teacher at St Michan's School (otherwise St Malachy's) and exposes with considerable bitterness the sadism behind the hierarchical structure and Catholic self-righteousness of his father's alma mater.

In *Lupercal*, the novelist had wanted to show how the forces of Ireland – religion; conventional middle-class morality; and Catholic puritanism towards sex – prevented the honourable and well-intentioned schoolmaster, Devine, from obtaining his due in life, Una Clarke, his allegedly "fast" Protestant girlfriend.

In this novel and in *Judith Hearne*, the physical and emotional dreariness of Belfast and its vicious circle of fear, loneliness and sadism are the quintessential qualities. They are also the realities which underlay the all-male, Catholic regime which Dr Moore endorsed. Moore's father was St Malachy's doctor, and founder and president of the Past Pupils' Union. He was also Lecturer and Examiner at Queen's University.

Though Moore began his career by writing about the city of his birth in *Judith Hearne*, it is his fifth novel, *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, (the title is from a poem of the same name by American, Wallace Stevens) which is the most directly autobiographical. It depicts the events which took place between his leaving St Malachy's and, a few years later, escaping Belfast. It can be assumed that the family life of Gavin Burke, Moore's other self, as well as his adventures in the Air Raid Precautions (ARP), dramatize many of his feelings and situations of his own life in Belfast in the war years of 1939-45.



Belfast's first Blitz occurred on 7-8 April, 1941, and it was followed a week later by what became known as the Easter Tuesday Raid. In *The Emperor*, Moore conflates the two raids in which the men and women of the ARP came into their own. Belfast was ablaze, whole areas were devastated, many

hundreds were dead, injured or rendered homeless. “Bodies were found in the streets, spread-eagled over pavements, even collapsed over roofs and buildings and trees, blown there by explosives. All was changed.” (*The Emperor*).

On the roof of the Nurses’ Home with his chum Freddy Hargreaves, and amid the noise of exploding bombs, Gavin Burke (otherwise the author) glories in the liberating orgy of destruction being enacted all around him. Hitler had found Belfast and things would never be the same. “Tonight, history had conferred the drama of war on this dull, dead town in which he had been born.”

The second Luftwaffe raid left the Clifton Street home of the Moore family badly damaged and uninhabitable, after a landmine had obliterated a nearby police barracks. The Moore family rented a house at 13 Camden Street, between the Lisburn Road and University Street. This house, a rather depressing three storey terrace, was to be the setting for the trials and tribulation of Judith Hearne. The following March, Dr Moore died, over-work contributing to his sudden heart failure and making him, in a sense, a casualty of war.

One can almost feel Moore’s apparent resentment of Belfast in the description of rain-sodden streets in all three of his Belfast novels. It is a literary device which he uses to great effect to convey an atmosphere of gloom and doom. The novels are replete with sentences, almost poetic in tone, in which the novelist captures the mood of an occasion by coupling a dark passage with an equally sombre depiction of the prevailing weather. The following description in *The Emperor* of Gavin Burke moving a body on the night of the Blitz exemplifies this strategy:

“Her cold, stiff hand in his, Gavin dragged her behind him out of the door, into the thick foggy drizzle of rain, dragging her corpse across the cold, wet concrete of the yard.”

Likewise, the loneliness of Judith Hearne in her bed-sit, “waiting like a prisoner for the long night hours,” is emphasised in the following atmospheric passage:

“The rain began to patter again on the windows, growing heavier, soft, persistent Irish rain coming up Belfast Lough, caught in the shade of Cave Hill. It settled on the city, a night blanket of wetness.”

In a similar vein, as Diarmuid Devine awaits the arrival of Una Clarke in *Lupercal*, the dismal weather has a foreboding tone concerning their fragile relationship:

“The sky cast a harsh, strange light as the afternoon died away in a storm threat. Spatters of rain began to appear on the pavement. They grew thicker, beating on the corrugated roof with a noise like operatic thunder.”

Shortly before his death, Moore wrote, “There are those stateless wanderers who, finding the large world into which they have stumbled vast, varied and exciting, become confused in their loyalties and lose their sense of home. I am one of those wanderers.”

For Diarmuid Devine and Judith Hearne there would be no rainbow to follow the Belfast rain. Rather, their dull, inhibited, loveless existence – like the rain – was destined to be unremitting. As the German bombs rained on Belfast, however, Gavin Burke (Brian Moore’s alter ego) felt joy in the knowledge that he was destined to escape the city of his birth to become “one of those wanderers”.

**When I walked down the streets, I asked myself, are these my people?
is this my hometown, am I who I am?**

Azar Nafisi



Turnstones Drama Group
presents

Sleeping Beauty

Walter Nelson Hall, Groomsport
Thursday 22nd February 7.45pm
Friday 23rd February 7.45pm
Saturday 24th February 2.30pm & 7.45pm
Adult £10/Child £5

Tickets on sale Walter Nelson Hall
Saturdays 3rd, 10th & 17th February
1.30 - 2.30pm
or contact Mervyn on 9146 9994
or church office on 9146 2552



In 1932, a young actor, trying to make his mark in Hollywood,
took a screen test. A talent judge who watched his performance
was less than enthusiastic as he noted,
"Can't act. Can't sing. Can dance a little."
The actor was Fred Astaire ...

FROM THE CAMPBELLS

Our family -'The Campbells' - moved from Bangor to the United Arab Emirates (Ras al Khaimah) in August 2013. The new news is that we have relocated to live in Dubai. Ian has taken up a new position as Head Teacher of Secondary in a school in Abu Dhabi, with a company called 'Gems Education' - which he loves. I am still working in Ras al Khaimah in the operating theatres of a Government hospital called Sheikh Khalifa Specialty Hospital, which is run by MOPA (Ministry of Presidential Affairs) and managed by Seoul National University Hospital, South Korea. So, due to the distance between Ian's job and mine, we relocated our home to Dubai. The children have grown into wonderful young adults: Chloe is now 19 and studying Accountancy, Finance and Business in Heriot Watt University, Dubai campus, whilst Erin, who is 16 and Kieran, 14 are studying in years 11 and 10 in Gems Metropole School in Dubai.



Even though life is busy, we still fit in some family time – recently we went to Oman and saw dolphins. We took a Dhal cruise off the coast of Al Kasab, Oman and it was amazing to see the dolphins in their natural habitat. The weather is beautiful now, with a cool 15 degrees in the morning and heating up to around 28 at midday. The children, however, still miss the cold weather, so with limited time off work (as Christmas is not a holiday here) we are going to Georgia for four days to get some cool weather and hopefully some snow!!

In this season of Christmas, I wanted to share our experiences with you all. I suppose you might think that living in an Arabic/Muslim country, we would not be free to worship in our own chosen faith. However, this is not the case and I will tell you a little about our experiences.

His Highness Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr al Qasimi, ruler of Ras al Khaimah, donated the land where all non-muslim church buildings are situated. We attend St. Luke's and the current building was opened in 2012. It is an Anglican church under the Chaplaincy of Dubai & Sharjah with the Northern Emirates and the Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. In the compound, there are ten churches (St. Luke's Anglican Church, Seventh Adventist Church, RAK Evangelical Church, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church), which are used by many, and for many services in many languages.



St. Luke's is truly a multicultural and diverse congregation and the picture below is of some of the members following the harvest service. The minister is Father Jon, who is American and studied in Wales. We worship on a Friday, as this is the first day of the weekend and the holy day in the UAE. On 24th November, the community is holding its Ecumenical Christmas conference, amongst four of the churches in the compound; there will be singing and games for the children and, of course, food - a wonderful way to unite people.



From our family over here, to your family over there, we wish you a very merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year!

The Campbells xx

maureen.campbell97@gmail.com

IT IS A BIG AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD. MOST OF US LIVE AND DIE IN THE SAME CORNER WHERE WE WERE BORN AND NEVER GET TO SEE ANY OF IT. I DON'T WANT TO BE MOST OF US.

OBERYN MARTELL, *GAME OF THRONES*

A NEW YEAR BLESSING

May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding you from all sorrow and pain,
But by strengthening you to bear it as it comes;
 Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
 Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
 Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright, even in the shadows;
 Not by making your life always pleasant,
But by showing you when people
 and their causes need you most,
and by making you anxious to be there to help.
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you
 for the year ahead.

Author unknown



Hi Everyone,

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone in the church who has helped me with fundraising for my expedition to Nicaragua and Costa Rica with Raleigh International. I have been overwhelmed by the kindness and support and this has been a great encouragement to me as I prepare for my journey in February.

I will be heading over to London on 25th November to attend a training event. This will be an opportunity for me to learn more about the expedition, what I will be doing when we are away and it will also be a chance for me to meet up with other members of the group that I will be travelling with. I am hoping that we will be able to meet up and travel together on the same flights. I will probably fly from London to Managua via Miami. I will need to renew my ESTA to travel through the USA and I have a few vaccinations to update.

I am hoping to give everyone an update at the end of January, before I leave. Once again, thank you so much for all your help and support. Please remember me in your prayers.

Adam.

Raleigh is a sustainable development organisation with 30 years of expertise in working through, for and with young people to create lasting change, believing that “when local communities and young people work side by side to create positive change, it empowers them. And it’s the energy and motivation of empowered people that creates lasting change.” <https://raleighinternational.org/>

This ethos is in keeping with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2016-2030, which aim to end extreme poverty, promote equity and opportunity for all, and protect the planet.

At its essence, sustainability means ensuring prosperity and environmental protection without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. A sustainable world is one where people can escape poverty and enjoy decent work without harming the earth’s essential ecosystems and resources; where people can stay healthy and get the food and water they need; where everyone can access clean energy that doesn’t contribute to climate change; where women and girls are afforded equal rights and equal opportunities.

Be a global citizen. Act with passion and compassion. Help us make this world safer and more sustainable today and for the generations that will follow us. That is our moral responsibility.

Ban-Ki Moon, UN Secretary-General, 2007-2016

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

SUNDAY 17th DECEMBER 2017

7.00 pm



Do plan to attend this special service of lessons and carols, regarded over the years as a meaningful way to welcome the Christmas season. The choir has been rehearsing appropriate music and this year, three new, contemporary carols will be introduced – *If I had been in Bethlehem; Adore Him, Emmanuel; and Jesus, my Jesus* – along with the ever-popular *Do you hear what I hear?* arranged by Harry Simeone. There will be the usual opportunity for the good congregational singing for which Groomsport Presbyterian is renowned. A full church will be a true encouragement for those who are preparing to make this a service of real significance.

John Ekin

GIFTS FOR A KING

Bring him thy precious things
And lay them at his feet;
The gold of love, the hope that springs
The unknown ways to meet.

Bring him thy lovely things;
The joy that conquers care,
The faith that trusts and sings,
The frankincense of prayer.

Bring him thy bitter things;
The myrrh of grief and fears,
The aching heart that stings
With pain of unshed tears.

These for thy gifts to him;
And for his gifts to thee,
The comfort of his steadfast love,
His tender sympathy.

Annie Johnson Flint

KNYSNA AFTER THE DEVASTATION OF THE FIRE

Hazel & Stanley Megahey

We were told of the fire which swept through Knysna and the surrounding areas before we arrived in September. The photographs which were sent did not prepare us for what we were to witness.

There were 1055 homes lost. Many homes did not have insurance. 'Why insure - who needs it?' must have been a view then. A top cardiologist had surprisingly had 55 of his patients who did not have insurance, yet were able to pay his high fees.

Lee Erasmus made a presentation to our church in July, when we brought them to



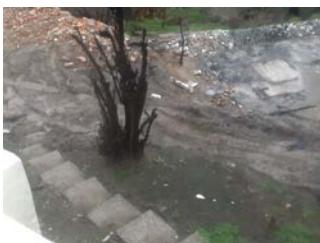
Ireland. I knew things were difficult for Lee and Tom, as they were left with just the clothes on their back. They lost their house to the fire, which spread in just ten minutes, engulfing theirs and six of their neighbours'. Their visit to us gave them respite - it became apparent that it was the right decision to proceed with their visit. Their burnt home is hard to put into words, to describe what is left: metal melted; glass folded from the intense heat.

The countryside was burnt to what now resembles a television war scene. It must have been devastating to be evacuated to the island in the lagoon and watch the wall of fire over your home. We were told, 'if you think things look bad now, then that is nothing to immediately after the fire.'



Our friends Maddie and Mervyn Crous lost their home - which was inside Pledge Park Nature Reserve, where Mervyn is the Warden. They arrived home to watch their home burn in five minutes, and could not rescue anything. All family photographs, etc, lost - these are the hardest, the things people miss most, especially Maddie.

Life moves on.



The trees which were burnt are now being harvested. The ground is being cleaned up, with the chipping machines working flat out. The rains have come - they should have arrived before the fires. The growth has started, with the greenery returning. The level 5 water shortage is still a problem, as reservoirs are at critically low level.

The country of South Africa came together after the fire. Clothes, along with food and water, were sent from all parts. Kloppers, the electrical warehouse, opened up their basement to store the massive amount of supplies which arrived.

Knysna Presbyterian Church played its part. Presbytery released funds which acted as much needed emergency relief. Groomsport Presbyterian played its part, as it has supported the Outreach Church Fund, which was also used. Our church's

donation of £1000 was used to support the Malawian members, who lost either their homes or jobs, as many are domestics and gardeners.



The church is helping in getting members' banking facilities restored.

Many had no time to get their IDs, passports, etc, out of their safe. Banks refused to give them their own money, as they had no details.

The building and reconstruction work has started. Many insurance companies have paid out. There are mixed feelings; many have taken their money and left Knysna. New building methods are being tried in order to speed construction.

Some insurance companies are on their usual form. Claims of having paid too much in premiums (over insured) are not being paid out. Under-insured (average clause), again causing problems. The exact numbers involved are not known but this is talked over at every outing. To make a claim, having to submit an inventory of the loss, and receipts of all items, especially kitchen equipment and garage items, makes it difficult to process.

We lost one of our friends, David Smith, to a massive heart attack the night before we left. There have been many members who cannot attend due to illness. The



numbers attending are down but the membership is the same. Children attending are the Malawians. Dressed to perfection, with their hair in their traditional style, they make our Sunday highlight. The Malawian children have their Sunday School in the church hall. There is a Malawian service in their language once a month.

Wayne van Herdeen announced before we left that he has accepted a calling to Centurion West Presbyterian in Johannesburg, leaving on 1st March 2018. This is a big church. Frances, his wife, was never at ease in Knysna as she has asthma and was used to living in the drier climate of Natal.

The church finances are being taken over by Glenn, as Lionel - the previous treasurer - is bed-ridden with an infected hip, which had to be removed and is unlikely to be replaced. Glenn prepared accounts which were in deficit, but which have now turned positive in the last month.

The annual jam and cake stall was the week before we left and raised R10000. Everything sold. We had to do our shift on the Saturday at the fête on the island.

We had great fun with the Irish Rugby score against the Springboks! They love their rugby and the result is not going down well in the newspapers.

We are home for Christmas, returning to Knysna in late January. 'Why are you going home?' we are asked. The reason: nothing compares with home at Christmas, and the Carol Service. Hazel would not have it any other way.

IN SEARCH OF ST. PAUL IN THESSALONICA, PHILIPPI AND ATHENS

Denis Campbell



Hilary and I have enjoyed several holidays in Greece, but always in the southern half of the country and the islands. We had always wanted to trace the footprints of Saint Paul in northern Greece. This October we made plans to fulfil our dream. We set off to Thessalonica, hoping to see the sights, but keeping an eye open for the little Jewish tent-maker, who was perhaps the greatest missionary of all time. We were blessed with blue skies and warm sunshine.

Our first surprise was Thessalonica itself. It is a very attractive city. It has a long promenade by the sea, leading to the famous White Tower, a medieval castle that was once part of the fortifications built by the Ottoman Empire. The city centre was re-designed after a big fire a hundred years ago. They summoned a French architect and so part of the centre resembles Paris, an example worth emulating. Thessalonica is a university city and is full of young people. There is a palpable 'buzz' about the place.

We were sure that Paul would have wandered around the Roman forum, talking to other leather-workers and making contact with Jews who might be interested in the good news that their Messiah had come. One morning we set out to visit the forum and its excellent museum. Outside, I stopped to listen to a group of American young people who had the same notion as I did. They were reading Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians and dwelling on the apostle's words of encouragement: *Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.* We recalled that First Thessalonians is a very friendly letter, full of encouragement. Paul could get angry, but his furious letters are directed at the Corinthians and the Galatians, not the Thessalonians and Philippians.



On Sunday, we went to the Church of England service of Morning Prayer, held in the German Lutheran Church. There were just eighteen of us gathered round the table for the service. One of the readings prepared us for another encounter with Paul. It was Philippians, chapter two - which contains that inspiring hymn to Christ who humbled himself as a servant, but was exalted by God (verses 5-11).

A few days later, we were a hundred miles further north in Philippi, wandering around the ruins of the ancient market place. Hilary and I read that hymn again. The hymn was probably composed not by Paul but by members of the church in Philippi, and Paul was quoting it back to them by way of encouragement. We also sang Caroline Maria Noel's version of the hymn, *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.* Philippi has an excellent Roman theatre where performances still take place today, and a rather unpleasant hovel which is claimed to be the prison where Paul and his friend Silas were unjustly locked up - only to be



liberated after an earthquake. I hope it is not the actual prison mentioned in Acts, chapter 16. I would hate to be incarcerated in such a horrible place.



We wandered half a mile beyond the ruins to the little town of **Lydia**. It is named after Paul's first convert in Europe, Lydia, a wealthy lady who sold purple cloth, a luxury item. There are ruins of a baptistery there, marking the place where Paul baptised this enterprising businesswoman, who now found herself in the even bigger business of Jesus Christ and his dawning kingdom (Acts 16.14-15).

Our third centre on the trip was Athens, that bustling capital city, now very much down on its luck due to financial meltdown. However, the Acropolis and its majestic ruins never fail to inspire us. I could contemplate the Parthenon for hours. It is truly the most beautiful building ever constructed, perfect in form and design. And just in front of the magnificent entrance to the Acropolis is Mars Hill, where Paul delivered a powerful sermon. According to Acts 17, Paul decided to start where his hearers were by speaking about a strange shrine he had noticed in the city, dedicated to 'the unknown God.' It was this unknown God whom Paul now proclaimed to them, announcing how he had raised his son from the dead. The **Athenians, unlike the Thessalonians and Philippians, were not impressed by Paul's preaching.** He failed to found a church in that city.

We visited several churches and monasteries on our trip, always looking out for Paul among the icons, those sacred paintings of the saints so beloved of the Greek Orthodox Church. In a few places we spotted the face we sought, a little man with receding hair, a hooked nose and thick eyebrows, labelled 'O Agios Pavlos'. Yes, the little tent-maker's legacy is still to be found in faraway Greece and, of course, in Groomsport too!

In your relationships with one another,
have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something
to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death -
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2: 5-11



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NEWS FROM FORMER INTERNS

Merry Christmas to all our friends at Groomsport. The Nix family loves and misses you all. Elizabeth is doing very well in school. She recently won an award for excellent behavior, which I bragged about to anyone who would listen for several days afterwards. Steven is in love with superheros and only wants to wear his Iron Man or Captain America costumes around the house. Rebecca was baptized on November 12 and it was a service full of celebration and joy. She behaved like an angel through the whole event. The kids only want one thing from Santa this year, a trip back to DisneyWorld! Luckily my sister works at Disney, so thanks to her discount it looks like Santa is going to grant their wish. I think all Eric and I want for Christmas is a silent night... without any children waking us up!



Katie Nix (Intern 2008/2009)

rev.katie.nix@gmail.com



*Dear Groomsport family,
I hope that you are all doing well. I have been thinking about you often, and my congregation in Baltimore sends greetings.*



It has been a wonderfully busy Fall. On October 14th, my fiancée, Lauren, and I were married at a beautiful ceremony on the Chesapeake Bay. We were delighted to have so many family, friends, and much of our congregation present with us. I'll be sure to send photos along when I get them in the Spring.

Our prayers remain with you all. We hope that you have a lovely Christmas!

Best,

Jennifer

Jennifer Barchi, Princeton Intern, 2010/2011

jbarchi@gmail.com

STARTING TO FEEL LIKE HOME

Someone once told me that it takes six months of living in a new place for it to feel like home. Maybe there is some truth to that, because Mary Erin, David, and I have been living in Springfield for almost five months now and it is just now starting to feel, ever so slightly, like home. There are still boxes to unpack and pictures to hang, but we are slowly finding our feet here.



Life at church is going quite well. In the past months we have welcomed new members, hosted our local Presbytery (a day-long affair involving providing two meals), and held congregation-wide discussions about where God is calling our congregation in the next five years. Being Presbyterian in southwest Missouri can be a challenge; in our area Presbyterians make up less than 5% of the Christian population. It can be tempting to turn inward and focus only on ourselves, protecting what little ground we have,

but that is not the call of the Gospel. So, we are praying and dreaming and looking to the future with hope and excitement. It is a joy to serve a congregation that, like Groomsport, is dedicated to mission and worship and fellowship.

Our family life is also filled with excitement. Every day David is learning and growing; it is hard to believe that when he was born, there was concern about his weight — yesterday, at a visit to the doctor, he weighed in just shy of two stone! He enjoys exploring anywhere we go and is generally easy-going and relaxed, a quality I credit to his Ulster upbringing. It seems that every week there are new words in his vocabulary and he never seems to have much trouble letting us know what he wants.



A few weeks ago we celebrated Halloween, which is quite a big deal here. Between events at the local libraries and churches, David got quite the stash of goodies — most of which, sadly, had to be eaten by mom and dad. He dressed up as a monkey, guided by Mary Erin in a giant banana suit.

Our biggest adventure this Fall, however, was a week-long visit back to Princeton and Thompson Memorial Presbyterian Church, the congregation I served while studying in seminary. I was asked back to lead worship for their Stewardship Sunday. It was a great joy to see lots of old friends and congregation members. One of the huge highlights of the week was getting to spend an evening with Paul and Catherine Dalzell! Paul had just arrived in Princeton to interview for the next intern as we were ending our trip, so we took them to our favorite restaurant in the area and had a grand time.

While we are coming to love our new home here in Springfield, we certainly miss life by the sea in Groomsport. There are days I would trade quite a lot for a scone with jam and cream after a walk down the shore. We can only begin to express how thankful we are for the love and grace you showed the three of us. Know that you are all in our thoughts often.

We would love to hear from you by email or post; our address is below.

With much love,

Chris, Mary Erin, and David Miller, 2015/2017

preachingpanda@gmail.com

4311 South Elmview Avenue
Springfield, MO 65804
United States of America





Greetings from the Irmer Family

We hope this finds everyone in and around Groomsport doing well. Life in Lawrenceville, New Jersey is going well. Amelia continues to enjoy her work in the Religious Ministries office in the Princeton Hospital, while also leading our Deacons at our church. Alison, 9, started a new school (Lawrence Intermediate School) and is in the 4th grade. She has been taking voice lessons, yoga, and is in chorus.

I continue to enjoy my call to be the minister at Slackwood Presbyterian Church. We have focused a lot of time and energy on community outreach. Events such as Outdoor Movie Nights, Summer Festivals, and semi-annual rummage sales allow us to reach out into the community throughout the year. Another highlight has been returning to coaching youth basketball. This month, I directed free after-school basketball clinics for boys and girls 4th- 7th grade. It was a great time and we had nearly 40 children register.

As I searched for next year's seminary intern, it was great to run into Paul and Catherine Dalzell at Princeton Seminary. It was great to catch up and I am really excited to have them attend our church tomorrow morning.



Our family is looking forward to Thanksgiving and the Advent Season. We have so much to be thankful for, including our friendships with so many of you. We continue to enjoy the Facebook photos we see of many of you, miss you all, and wish you "all the best."

Love,
Ryan, Amelia and Alison Irmer
mirmer@gmail.com Princeton Intern 2014/2015

Christendom is one great people composed of persons of every country in concord in their faith and their love because there is One God, One Lord, One Spirit, One Hope. That is the marvellous mystery of the people of God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Advent and Christmas Greetings from Myrtle Beach!

Life continues at a busy pace here. The beginning of my doctoral work was enriching and challenging, but well worth it. I have managed in the last couple of months to get a couple of vacations in - one to see my parents and other relatives in California, while also having some play time at Disneyland and Universal Studios; and one at Thanksgiving to Michigan, to see my sister and brother-in-law and my adorable niece and nephew. Now, as I'm sure as with Groomsport, the pace is really picking up as we head into Advent and Christmas festivities. While it is a fast pace at this time of year, I also find it a joyous one and love it all.



May God bless each of you in this season and may 2018 bring wonderful things to your households.

Merry Christmas! Christa (Princeton Intern 2004/2005)
CBrewer@mbfpc.com



Lord, behold our family here assembled.
We thank you for this place in which we dwell
for the love that unites us,
for the peace accorded us this day,
for the hope with which we expect the morrow,
for the work, the health, the food, and bright skies
that make our lives delightful
for our friends in all parts of the earth.
Amen.

Robert Louis Stevenson

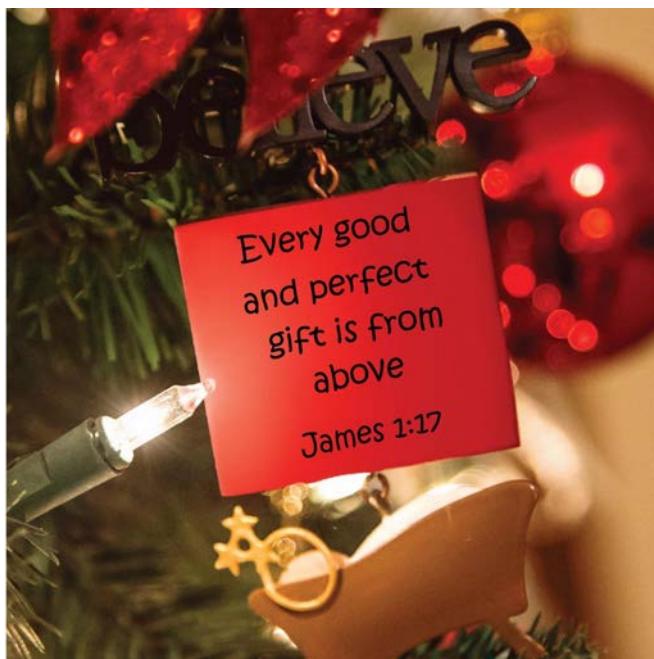
FORTHCOMING SERVICES



Carols by Candlelight
Sunday 17th December
at 7.00pm

Monday 25th December 10.30am Christmas Day Family Service
No Evening Service

Sunday 7th January 11.30am New Year Communion Service
No Evening Service



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 31st January	Friendship Lunch
Thursday 22nd, Friday 23rd Saturday 24th February	Pantomime
Wednesday 28th February	Friendship Lunch
Tuesday 6th March	Congregational AGM (7.45pm)
Saturday 10th March	PW Coffee Morning