
“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given”



EDITORIAL

Dear friends,

Christmas has come upon us very quickly. When I was installed in McQuiston on the 15 September,



Christmas felt like a long time away, but yet here I am writing an article for the Christmas edition of the Pulse.

Some years I'm very organised for Christmas, I have presents bought and wrapped by the end of November. I have my advent devotional book bought and ready to go, alongside a chocolate advent calendar. I know who I'm seeing and when – the diary full of arrangements to catch up with friends and family.



Other years though (and I must confess this year feels like one of those) Christmas seemingly comes out of nowhere and I'm not quite ready for it. Everything is rushed, manic and busy and it feels hard to stop and begin to enjoy the festivities.



In her excellent Advent Devotional¹ 'Awaiting the Rising Sun', local author Rebecca Smyth describes advent like this: *"Advent is how we prepare to celebrate Jesus at Christmas. Because with all of the busy stuff going on, Advent signals that it's time to slow down and make room in our hearts for Him."*



Now admittedly this isn't always easy. Sometimes life is so busy it can feel impossible to find the time to stop and prepare.

For some of us the past year has been really difficult and Christmas coming can feel like a reminder of the things and the people we have lost. While everyone else feels merry and bright, we're just trying to keep going.

Although it wasn't written as a Christmas Carol, the hymn 'Joy to the World' has become a big part of Christmas tradition in our churches. And there's something particularly meaningful about what it calls us to do:



"Let Every Heart, Prepare Him Room"

I don't know how you are feeling as we are approaching Christmas: You could be like an excited child counting down the days, or you could feel like hibernating until the whole thing is over? However we are feeling, the message is the same.



We need to make room in our hearts for the Lord Jesus. When we do, we meet the one who brings us real joy, real peace, and real hope that lasts longer than the festive season.



"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." Hebrews 12 vs 1 - 2

Naomi and I would like to thank you all for the warm welcome we've received at McQuiston so far, and wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



Philip Boyd

1 Rebecca's Advent Devotional is available at <https://www.rebeccasmith.co.uk>

SPECIAL SERVICES

17 December @ 11am
Messy Church

17 December @ 7pm
Candlelight service



24 December
No evening service

25 December @ 10am
Christmas Day family service

31 December @ 11am
Morning Sunday service

31 December @ 5pm
Evening service

7 January @ 11am
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

4 February @ 7pm
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

3 March @ 11am
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper



ORGANISATIONAL NEWS

Transformers

We started our 13th year of Transformers in September and have been blessed throughout those years. We know the congregation pray for us and thank them for that.



We have had a lot of new children join, the total on the roll is 32. Most weeks have around 25 children. We are very fortunate to have a group of leaders that are very faithful, Ken and I couldn't keep going without them.

The children are generally very well behaved which helps a lot. It can be daunting seeing so many children come into the DD Boyle room each week but every child that's there gets to hear about the love of Jesus.

We are privileged to look after the children for an hour each week. We also get to know the children's parents. If I could ask for the congregation to keep praying for the children and leaders.



To God be the glory.

Heather Sergeant

Storehouse

The Storehouse continues to provide a valuable service in these times of need to those families who are trying to survive in this economic crisis. Your continued support in either donating food or financial help is very much appreciated.



Thank you all for your help in this outreach.

Alan Bousfield

Senior Members Fellowship

The Senior Members Fellowship met again in September after the summer break. We had a lovely afternoon chatting and catching up over a cuppa and some treats.



In October we had Bobi Brown as our guest speaker who was the missionary in Canton Street for many years and is now retired. In November we had John McCandless who did some craft with us and gave a spiritual message.



We are now planning our December Christmas Tea and organising a programme with some of our members taking part. We have our annual Christmas dinner in January with some music and singing after dinner. All of our activities are of course in God's will.

We have been blessed in this organisation over many years and hope, God willing, to continue into another year. Hilary and I wish all of our church family a happy and blessed Christmas.



Eileen and Hilary



Organisational Accounts

Please note that all Organisational Accounts should be audited and returned to myself no later than Sunday 25 February 2024.

Tim Graham

Ladies Christmas Night

Looking for a night out? Make new friends and have fun whilst making a Christmas table arrangement. Join us in the Church halls on Tuesday 12 December @ 7.30pm. Contact myself on 07933 278626 to book your place.



Linda Wray

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Operation Christmas Child

A massive thank you to all members of our congregation who contributed in any way to this year's Christmas Shoe-box Appeal. Some 79 shoe-boxes were filled and will bring much joy and delight to children abroad.



Roberta Graham

Presbyterian Children's Society

The purpose of the Society is providing grants to Presbyterian children and their families through regular and exceptional grants. The Society is currently assisting approximately 900 children in 440 families in over 200 congregations throughout Ireland.



**Presbyterian
Children's
Society**

If you would like to support the Society please give your contribution to myself, it will be greatly appreciated by the Society as in previous years.

Sheila McAllister

Presbyterian Herald

This is the official magazine of Presbyterian Church in Ireland and it has a readership of 25,000. It contains news items, reflection pieces and articles from a wide range of sources. Contributors come from many spheres including ministers and fellow Presbyterians.

Obtaining a copy has never been easier and your church agent (myself) is always happy to provide you with one. It costs £20 per year (10 copies), so let myself or your Elder have your subscription before end of year.



Sheila McAllister

Free Will Offering

Please note that if you wish your Free Will Offering or giving to other funds to be credited to 2023, these must be received no later than morning worship, Sunday 24 December 2023. Any monies received after this will be credited to 2024.



Tim Graham

Messy Church

Join us for the next Messy Church on Sunday 17 December. As this season gets busy with all the hustle and bustle that this time of year brings, why not come and join us at Messy Church as we unwrap the real Christmas story together.



Come and see what the very first Christmas was about. Find out about the real gift of Christmas that is for EVERYONE! Enjoy a messy Christmas with us; carols, games, food and fun for all from the youngest to the oldest. We would love to share some time with you this Christmas and look forward to seeing you there.

Kerry Sutton

Music @ McQuiston

An evening of Christian music and song delivered by local artists and musicians will be held on Saturday 24 February 2024 at 7:30pm.



Entry is, as always, free - but you'll probably have to pay to get back out!

Mark McKeown



Pastoral Visitation

The Christmas bustle has begun; traffic jams, shopping, TV ads and all sorts of chaos. All sadly nothing to do with the real reason for celebration - the birth of our Saviour. Christmas can also be a sad time for so many folk and this year we have also lost some of our church family.



Eileen and I continue to call and see those who live alone or are housebound and can't get out and about as they used to. Those in care homes, in hospital or those who have suffered loss we want to say "Thank you" for the warm welcome we always get when we call.

We wish you and your loved ones a happy and blessed Christmas and God willing we will see all of you in the New Year. In the meantime, God's richest blessings.

Hilary and Eileen

United Appeal

As a Church we are doing a vast array of things together for our support of the United Appeal, making big differences in our society here in Ireland as well as all over the world. Your contributions, for example, help to fund 21 Global Mission workers in 9 countries.



Since the relaunch of the white box in April, we have collected an additional £375, helping us get closer to our 2023 target of honour of £9,450.

Thank you to all who have contributed as part of your weekly offering and to those who have returned filled white boxes.



We still have approximately £3,000 to raise, so every little helps. If you would like a white box to collect loose change in to help this cause, please let me know.

Phil Kempes

Letter from John McCandless

A travel agent looked up and saw an older man and an older woman looking into the shop window with hope felt smiles on their faces as they read the posters.



Having a good week of sales, the travel agent felt generous and invited them both into the shop and offered them a free holiday in sunny Spain. "I know things are difficult for you pensioners to afford a lovely holiday" he said, so he got his secretary to book them flights, hotel accommodation, trips and an all inclusive package holiday, FREE!



When the holiday was over, the woman made a swift visit to the travel agent and thanked him for his generosity once more, but asked "who was that old man you booked me in with?"

I must say that I have felt a great amount of generosity and welcome in McQuiston, as I have been allowed to be around and work with some of the projects that I had been involved with in my time with you. We are still planning that outreach with the schools, headed up by Linda Wray.



The Tuesday Seniors Members Fellowship is always a great place to be. I am also still involved with that ever youthful group, Transformers. Almost 25 'wee' school kids and 6 'big' kids, namely Ken and Heather and the rest of the leaders. I'm also having a lovely time with Craic & Coffee; still lots of fun! You should make an effort to get along there, if you haven't already been.



I look forward to upcoming events that I have been invited to take part in, such as the Senior Members Fellowship, Ladies Christmas Table Centre Night, 'Christmas Cracker' and a Christmas special Messy Church.

May our God continue to bless the work in and around this place. Yours,

John McCandless

AT THE APPOINTED TIME... GOD

As this 'special time' Christmas comes round for us once again, the season in which we remember and celebrate the birth of a tiny baby, Jesus. It is important to note that the birth of Jesus was at the appointed timing of Almighty God.



Galatians 4 vs 14 tells us, *"But when the fullness of time came, God.... sent forth His Son"*. This was not a chance timing, but in the plan and will of Father God for a specific purpose.

In retrospect of course, we know and recognise the plan for Jesus' life but at that time, the reason and purpose were unknown, except to a few people.

Jesus
IS
THE REASON
FOR
THE SEASON



I sometimes think that for Mary, receiving the news from an angel of her part in the plan, must have been such a shock to know that she was carrying a special child, and how challenging to have to tell her parents.



The Gospel account also tells that *'Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country, to the home of a cousin, Elizabeth, for three months'*.

This the beginning of Mary's 'time of waiting' and preparation, as God's predetermined plan for Jesus began to unfold.



Although being with her cousin will have been a comfort and support, Mary must have had many times, by herself, of doubting or querying what was happening in her life.

At times for ourselves, things happen that can be totally unexpected, and they can change our lifestyle, or affect our plans and the plans of others as well.

It is a human characteristic, for Christians as well as non-believers, to, at times, ask the question 'Why?' On such occasions it is vital to lean on God, and to pray for necessary strength to trust that, in His timing, we will understand what is happening.



The Gospel of John 1 vs 3 reminds us that, *"Through Him (God) all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made"*.

So, as the beginning of time and creation, set out in the book of Genesis, was a link in the chain of God's purposes for creation and mankind, so the birth of Jesus was an essential part of the plan of 'salvation' for God's creation and the generations of people to follow.



Likewise, you and I fit in in God's wonderful planning, but very often unknown to us, prior to events happening.

Psalm 139 vs 13 - 16, reminds us *"For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb; Your works are wonderful,"* and *"Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be."*

Jesus told His followers that He had come so that they might have life and have it in abundance.



In Jesus' time, as in our world today, many people were not interested in, or wanted, what their Creator had planned for them.

It is awesome however to realise all this, and to know that God has had a plan for your life and for mine before birth. If we accept this reality and desire to have God's planning as the way to live, it gives each of our lives purpose, focus and meaning.



At this appointed time, along with myself, perhaps consider how much time you give to 'doing', 'getting' or 'being' according to what you want yourself – often without bringing Jesus into the picture. It is timely for us all to review all these factors as we come to the close of this year and before, in God's plan, we commence 2024.

In the rush and busyness of this Christmas season, and in a world that is in turmoil with war, hatred, suffering, loss, and immense need, let us endeavour to build in quality time to worship our Creator, Saviour, Sustainer, Friend and Lord.



At the same time remembering and practically sharing and giving where and when we can, to help all who have so little in comparison to ourselves, in terms of the means of existence, loneliness, despair and suffering. This is God's appointed time for us to live, care and serve in His name and for His glory.

Anna Johnston

WORLD DEVELOPMENT APPEAL 2023

The annual World Development Appeal of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland offers congregations the opportunity to learn more about and to support the valuable and vital work of sustainable development undertaken by our



development partners,
Christian Aid and
Tear fund.

Focusing on a particular project gives congregations the opportunity to 'go deep' in understanding some of the challenges of sustainable development in a particular location and to see how the partner agency, working with communities there, is seeking to address them.

The 2023 World Development Appeal focusses on people who have been forced to leave their homes and land and start their lives from scratch.



Around the world, millions of people have been forced to leave their homes for many reasons, including conflict, climate change and land grabbing.

These people often have to leave with little notice, settling in new places with few resources.

Displaced from their homes, they have to start from scratch. How do they start again?

Sierra Leone is a country of 8.8 million people on the West Coast on Africa.



Its climate and soil make it an ideal place to grow oil palm to produce palm oil, a product used worldwide to make chocolate, biscuits, toothpaste and detergents, to name just a few.

The palm oil industry is huge worldwide, with around half of all supermarket products containing some sort of palm oil.



Large multinational companies have taken advantage of this demand, seeking suitable land for their enormous oil palm plantation with little regard for the people who live on that land.



Many families are left with nothing and have to start over and rebuild their lives.

This year's Appeal will work with Christian Aid to seek justice for those who have had their land taken.

The Appeal will also support Tear Fund projects, working through the local church to equip communities to reduce the impact of climate related disasters.



Catastrophic flooding can spell disaster for already vulnerable communities.

Regular flooding not only brings crop loss, disease, displacement and death, it sets communities back and pushes them further into poverty.

Local churches are equipping communities to reduce the impact of disasters. For families, it means they aren't starting from scratch every time a disaster strikes.



You will receive a World Development Appeal envelope with your Christmas edition of Pulse magazine. This can be returned on any Sunday in December.



Thank you for your support of this year's World Development Appeal.

Points for prayer:

- Pray for justice for those living under the shadow of injustice
- Pray for the people who have had to start from scratch after being displaced from their homes
- Pray for the organisations who are bringing hope by helping people rebuild their lives

CHRISTMAS POEMS

The true meaning of Christmas

In today's' day and time,
It's easy to lose sight,
Of the true meaning of Christmas
And one special night.

When we go shopping,
We say 'How much will it cost?'
Then the true meaning of Christmas,
Somehow becomes lost.

Amidst the tinsel, glitter
And ribbons of gold,
We forget about the child,
Born on a night so cold.

The children look for Santa
In his big, red sleigh
Never thinking of the child
Whose bed was made of hay?

In reality,
When we look into the night sky,
We don't see a sleigh
But a star, burning bright and high.

A faithful reminder,
Of that night so long ago,
And of the child we call Jesus,
Whose love, the world would know.

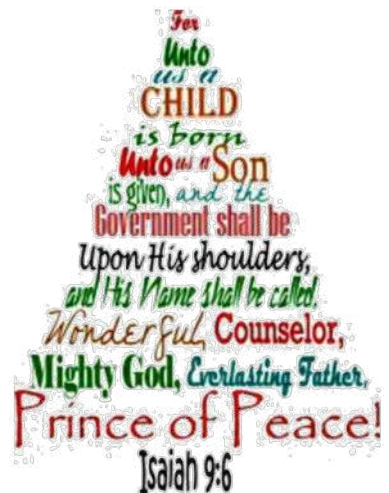
Brian K. Walters

Christmas Eve

Christmas has a darkness
Brighter than the blazing noon,
Christmas has a chillness
Warmer than the heat of June,
Christmas has a beauty
Lovelier than the world can show:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Earth, strike up your music,
Birds that sing and bells that ring;
Heaven has answering music
For all angels soon to sing:
Earth, put on your whitest
Bridal robe of spotless snow:
For Christmas bringeth Jesus,
Brought for us so low.

Christina Rossetti





AT REST

***“I am the Resurrection
and the Life”***

9 September

Mrs Clara Campbell,
Towell House

26 October

Mrs Rita Montgomery,
6 Ravenhill Avenue

BAPTISM

***“Suffer the little children
to come unto me”***

10 September

Georgia Bobbie
infant daughter of
Michael and Gillian Edgar,
20 Glendenning Avenue,
Portadown

VESTIBULE OFFICIALS

***“Be not forgetful
to entertain strangers”***

January

John Shivers, Angela Shivers,
Irene Murray
Convenor: Joan Gardner

February

Raymond Wray, Linda Wray,
Judith Connolly, Phil Kemps
Convenor: Alan Bousfield

March

Richard Hughes, Roy Noble,
Liz Noble
Convenor: Joan Gardner

April

Sheila McAllister
Convenor: Ken Galbraith



DIRECTORY

Rev Philip Boyd

Minister

52 Kings Road

Belfast

BT5 6JL

Phone: 07584 024 337

Email: minister@mcquistonpc.org

Mr John Shivers

Pulse Editor

11 Lead Hill Park

Belfast

BT6 9RW

Phone: 028 9079 1246

Email: jcshivers@virginmedia.com

Mr Kenneth Galbraith

Clerk of Session

Phone: 07842 423 161

Mrs Linda Wray

Deputy Clerk of Session

Phone: 07933 278 626

Mrs Hilary Hawthorne

Pastoral Visitor

Phone: 07443 531 326

McQuiston Presbyterian Church

83 Castlereagh Road BT5 5FE

Phone: 028 9045 8155

Web: www.mcquistonpc.org

Email: churchoffice@mcquistonpc.org



[mcquistonpc](https://www.facebook.com/mcquistonpc)



[mcquistonpc](https://www.youtube.com/mcquistonpc)