



## NEWSLETTER

## CHRISTMAS 2019

### *"God bless us, everyone!"*

It's that time of year again! Christmas is almost upon us. There is the tree to be put up, Christmas lights to be switched on, cards to be written, presents to be bought, special meals to be prepared, people to catch up with....so much to look forward to...



One of the fun things at this time of year can be settling down to a really good Christmas film. I'm sure we all have our favourites: 'It's a Wonderful Life', 'Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street', 'Home Alone', 'Polar Express', 'White Christmas', and so many more that are great viewing again and again. One that's always worth revisiting is Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. First published in 1843, the book and subsequent films tell the timeless story of the miser Ebenezer Scrooge who embodies everything Christmas shouldn't be.... He hates the time of year, is grumpy, mean, selfish and bad tempered. He refuses dinner invitations, turns away those seeking donations for the poor and only grudgingly allows his hardworking clerk, Bob Cratchit, Christmas Day off, unpaid of course!

But then something happens.... In the story Scrooge is visited through a dream on Christmas Eve by ghosts of his former business partner Jacob Marley and of Christmas Past, Present and Future. The ghosts confront Scrooge with the horrible person he has become and leave him sobbing and pleading for a second chance.

He awakens on Christmas morning a changed man, full of warmth and goodwill, generous and kind; he gives a donation to the poor he had rejected the day before, sends a turkey to the Cratchit home and gives Bob a pay rise.

It's a great story but also one that can help point us to the greatest story ever told; the love of God, as shown through sending His One and only Son. At Christmas we celebrate that for us something has happened, something amazing, the Christ-child born in a stable - the angels announced it, "Good news of great joy...a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10-11) In Dickens' tale, on that Christmas Eve Scrooge was changed, transformed, through being confronted by his past, present and bleak future. Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate, is also in the business of transformation, but this is no story, this is for real. Jesus calls us, each one, to put our trust in Him and as we do, so our past is put behind us, our present is lived in the light of His love and our future is secure.

This Christmas enjoy the trees and the lights, the presents and the cards, the lovely food, the precious time with family and friends and of course those timeless Christmas films. And may Christ, whose birth we celebrate, continue to transform us, by His Spirit at work within us, to be people he has called us to be -for we are all called to be people full of warmth and goodwill, generous and kind. Have a wonderful Christmas and in the words of Dickens, spoken through Bob Cratchit's son Tiny Tim, "May God bless us, everyone".

Every blessing

**Rev Janice**

## **An Outward Facing Community?**

We often use the Bible's picture of Church as family and as we approach Christmas which for many is a time when friends and family come together, we should reflect on those who find Christmas difficult and a time of grief and loneliness.

The doors of our Church should be open and inviting to those who are living in a broken world and we should seek to engage with them to demonstrate a better way of life. Do the doors of our Church life often slide closed behind us or open in invitation to others?

Session are currently engaged in a series of meetings to study a P. C. I. resource entitled 'Inside Out' which seeks to help us to welcome others as Christ has welcomed us.

Session would ask for your prayers as they study and seek to implement the lessons learned that we may

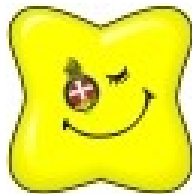


become a more outward facing community. We are privileged to have the example, set by our minister Rev Janice Browne, of someone who is always ready to listen, engage with and help others to come to know Jesus as their personal saviour.

**Sandy Dalzell**

## **The Girls' Brigade**

Our annual Enrolment Service was held on Sunday 17th November 2019. We would like to thank everyone who helped us in any way with this Service; it is much appreciated. Also a massive thank you and well done to all the girls who read and sang so well and with such enthusiasm.



Our Christmas party is on Thursday 19th December and our usual special guest will be in attendance.

There will be no GB on 26th of December or 2nd January. We will start back on Thursday 9th January at the usual time.

**Jennifer Mcdougall**

## **Sunday School**

Following the summer break we are now well settled in to the new routine with the week-to-week leadership of Carole, Heather and myself.

Our bible lessons have commenced in the early days of creation but we have jumped forward to the birth of Jesus as Christmas fast approaches. Crafts linked to the weekly lessons have been enjoyed by children and leaders alike. Thanks, Heather, for all your work!

The children are well settled with the consistency of leadership and their manners and enthusiasm are a joy to see! It is great to see new children joining us. It would be even better to see more.

We are presently working on a small Nativity for the morning of Sunday 22nd of December. Please support our young folk by attending. Parents and grandparents please continue to send your children. We appreciate your support!

**Sharron W.**

## **Church Life**

Christmas has sneaked up on us once again and the Community Carol Service on 1st December saw the church packed to capacity. The Christmas tree lights were switched on by the Mayor, Alderman Bill Keery with the help of the many children in attendance.

By the time you read this we will have had our Christmas Fayre/Coffee Morning on Saturday 7th December. This is a new idea as an alternative to the traditional evening event so we hope for good weather and good support.

We take this opportunity to thank all who have supported our various events over the past year and wish all a Happy and Blessed time at Christmas.

### **Christmas Services**

#### **Carols by Candlelight**

**Sun. 15th Dec. at 7pm**

**Family – Dressing-up – Service.**

**Sun. 22nd Dec. 11am**

#### **Christmas Day**

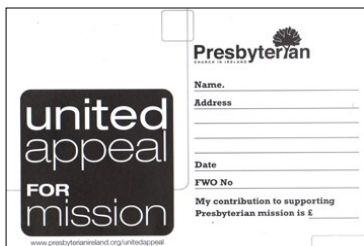
**Short Family Service – 10.30am**

**Sun. 5th January, 2020 - Communion**

## Financial Update

Can I start by wishing everyone a Happy and Blessed Christmas Season.

With this magazine you will have received the final United Appeal envelope for this financial year together with a



The image shows two documents. On the left is a 'United Appeal FOR mission' envelope with the website www.presbyterian.org.uk/uk/2019. On the right is a 'Presbyterian' form with fields for Name, Address, Date, and FWO No. Below these fields is the text 'My contribution to supporting Presbyterian mission is £' followed by a blank space for a number.

leaflet showing how the money is used. Those members who were at church on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December will also have heard Rev. Janice speaking on the subject and emphasising that all the money raised goes entirely to 'mission' and many very worthwhile projects at home and worldwide could not be undertaken without this Appeal. The Church Committee ask that you would pray for and give generously to this appeal. Unfortunately this year we are struggling to reach our target of £7778 (set by church house). To date we have £3119 towards this target. There will be some Gift Aid to add to this but we are still at least £3600 short!

**F.W.O:** On the Free Will Offering front it is encouraging to report that in the final quarter we are showing an increase of around 5% over September and October 2018 although we will struggle to finish the year on a par with last year. Whilst acknowledging that members do not have limitless resources the Church Committee appreciates the continued support and generosity of our contributing families.

**FWO Envelopes for 2020:** Next year's envelopes will be delivered with this copy of the Newsletter and also a note showing your contributions up to the middle of November. 'Top-up' contributions can be submitted up to Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January. **Please note that any donations received after 5<sup>th</sup> January will be acknowledged in the 2020 accounting year.**

*Ivan C. (Hon. Treasurer)*

## Property Fund

It is pleasing to report that the contributions to the Property Fund up to the middle of November are some 4.5% up on last year so I take this opportunity to thank all those regular contributors for their continuing support.

Thankfully our expenditure has been maintained at a reasonably low level in recent months so the Fund is in a satisfactory position to cover on-going maintenance issues that may arise.

As a congregation we are indebted to our Property Co-Ordinator, Jim Gibson, for all the work he does in ensuring that our church premises are maintained at their continuing high standard. We also acknowledge the excellent care that Norma takes in ensuring that the church premises are kept clean and tidy. Her efforts are very much appreciated.

*Tom J.*

## Christmas Decoration

Once again this year the Church has been tastefully decorated for Christmas including this beautiful montage of carol singers in period dress beside the Christmas tree.



Our thanks are due to Terry for the figures and to Marie, Christine and Billy for their excellent work of decoration.

For the Carols by Candlelight service on 15<sup>th</sup> December it is planned to set up the candles, etc., immediately after the morning service so volunteer helpers will be appreciated.

## **A note of thanks**

James, Julie, Ivan and family would like to thank the Congregation for their prayers and support throughout Marie's long illness; especially in the days before and after her passing. The family would particularly like to thank the ladies in the church who never forgot Marie; for visiting her in the nursing home and continually asking how she was doing. Special thanks must go to all who called and visited the family after Marie's passing and for the lovely baked goods they provided. The family would also like to thank the Catering Team for serving the refreshments after the funeral.

Elma, your medley of music before the service was perfect, it included some of Marie's favourite hymns, and we were very grateful to the Praise Group for leading the hymns at the service.

Heartfelt thanks must also go to the Rev. Janice for her prayerful support, particularly in Marie's last few days and in the days after her passing.

We would like to wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

*James, Julie, Ivan and family*

## **PW Fellowship**

At our PW Fellowship November meeting

we enjoyed a Crafty evening with Kay. It was messy but clean as we made felt, using colourful dyed fleece and soapy water, which we used to cover pens and make a few Christmas felt baubles. As you can see, the results were pleasing!



*Anne J.*

## **Scout Group**



The Scout Group has been very busy this term. Leaders have completed First Aid Training as required and management training has also been completed. 3 leaders are nearing the completion of their Wood Badge. Beavers and Cubs have completed their emergency and safety badges and learning about the emergency services. It was very pleasing to hear recently of one of our former scouts who carried out CPR on a lady when she collapsed in the queue in front of him. His training certainly stood him in good stead.

Cubs had a visit from the Coastguard and Beavers visited the local fire station. Each section of the Group laid wreaths on Remembrance Sunday paying tribute to those who lost their lives in WW1 and WW2. Cubs enjoyed success at the District Quiz bringing home the well deserved trophy. Beavers have been to the Ark Farm for their Christmas trip to meet a special visitor.

Scouts have had a busy couple of months since we started back. They have been camping overnight in shelters built by themselves in Mount Stewart at Halloween, which was cold but thankfully dry. They had the local guide dogs in for a visit to explain how helpful guide dogs can be and the work that goes into training a guide dog.

Last week was the County Dodgeball competition. This was a new fun event and our team came second and are looking forward to the Northern Ireland event next week.

The Scouts and leaders going to Poland for the European Jamboree in the summer of 2020 are making various plans - fundraising and teambuilding weekends. Preparations will continue in the New Year for the annual Scout Service in March when the young people will lead the service. Christmas is a time for special gifts and Scouts will deliver Christmas gifts in the community which is always a very enjoyable evening.

We would like to wish everyone the peace and blessings of this Christmas season.

*Christine and Andrew*