



The Joy of Christmas



I'm not quite sure the year of the photo, possibly 1967 but I know it was at Christmas with my first train set and the wonder of simply making something go round and round in endless circles. Joy!!!!

Our next-door neighbour was a photographer for the R.U.C. and my parents invited him to come in, take some photo shots. which he developed and dropped back. The photos were of the highest quality using a big flash unit and have stood the test of time. They are black and white windows into times when life was simpler, Christmas was simpler and dare I say it, joy was simpler.

Of course, you will have noticed that the joy of Christmas changes as we all grow older.

What makes us feel good, what we decide is the 'best Christmas ever' maybe becomes more about what we give to our children, grandchildren and other family members rather than what we can give to ourselves. But what if the 'best Christmas ever' had something deeper to offer?

What if we can know a Joy that empties us so that others may be filled?:

A joy when we support relief agencies to offer help and hope to those in our world who have so little;

When we fill local food banks so that people in our community can cope with the challenge and worry of low income;

When we visit those alone in Saintfield who through loss or circumstance have no joy;

When we speak out and stand for the immigrant in Northern Ireland despite what others do or say that deny them the joy of belonging to us!

Christmas joy becomes the best ever when our joy empties us more of who we are. so that so many others can be filled. It's the same joy God knew when he was emptied that we could be more in life, death and eternity. The joy of his son Jesus being given to the world that all could know the best ever joy for Christmas and beyond.

It's a joy we can see in all those whose lives and stories and faith surround the birth of Jesus into their lives.

Mary and Joseph know the joy of God's faithfulness to them over 9 months of facing challenge as well as a long journey to be in the place they needed to be.

Wise men know the joy of discovering true Kingship and power in a stable, not a palace.

Shepherds know the joy of Angels filling them with heavenly words and glory and the same joy causing them to search for this 'one' born of God for the world.

Anna and Simeon at the end of their lives, encounter the joy of the 'best Christmas ever' as they hold the baby they had been promised by prophets long ago. This joy completes their faith and worship, their longing and waiting. It was in many ways, the simplest of joys that defined the end of their lives, being filled by God's promise of more.

And maybe that is what our 'best Christmas ever' needs to be The simplest joy from God that changes everything in us, through us, around us and for us. A joy that only Jesus can make perfect not just through his birth and life and ministry, but in the gift of his death for us. the truth of his joyful resurrection and new birth that is the only hope for you and me. The only joyful hope for all the world.

Maybe however in life we have yet to discover and be satisfied with such joy? Maybe in our life we are only satisfied by things we make go round and round in small circles, stuff that we can control and never seem to ever fill us with anything more.

However, when Jesus becomes more than just a Christmas moment. When he is born to be the Christ and the Lord, your Christ, your Lord, then the joy of such endless Good News will be your 'best Christmas ever', for your lives, your death and your eternity. Such is this gift that makes our life more rather than less, a gift to be received that we can live life through and grow in serving our Jesus in this world as Jesus has served us.

May that be the best you can know of God for you this Advent and Christmas and to know the true peace and joy it brings.

**Have a joy filled Christmas
Chris, Wenda, Beth, Lucy & Harry**

Christmas Worship

Sunday Dec 7th

4.30pm Blue Christmas
A service for those who know loss



Sunday Dec 21st

7.00pm Candles & Carols

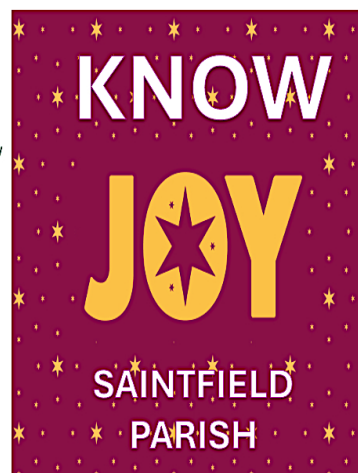


Christmas Eve

11.00pm Candles & Communion

Christmas Day

10.00am All Age Worship





Sunday **7 December** **Advent 2**
 8.30am Holy Communion (Trad)
 10.00am Family Communion
 Surprising Joy:
 Mary & Gabriel



4.30pm Blue Christmas
 (Service for loss this year and over many years)

Sunday **14 December** **Advent 3**
 8.30am Holy Communion (Trad)
 10.00am A very different Nativity



Sunday **21 December** **Advent 4**
 8.30am Holy Communion (Trad)
 10.00am Morning Worship: Brightest Joy
 Angels & Shepherds

7.00pm Carols, Candles and Christmas



Christmas Eve 11.00pm

Coffee
 10.30pm



Christmas Day
 8.30am Holy Communion (Trad)
 10.00am All Age Worship
 Unwrapped Joy



Sunday **28 December** **Christmas 1**
 10.00am Morning Worship: Best Joy ever.

December Tea/Coffee Rota

- 5 Street Fair teams needed
 7 **Help needed**
 14
 21 Julie Ritchie & Carol Burgess
 21 **Carol Service Team needed 7.00pm**
 24 **Christmas Eve Team needed 10.30pm**
 25 Christmas Day (no Tea or Coffee)
 28 No Tea or Coffee



Flowers Rota

- 7 In memory Canon &
 Mrs Woodrow
 14 June Butler
 21 **Christmas Tree memories**
 28 **Christmas Tree memories**



3 WISE MEN Sit out FRIDAY 5 DEC



SDZ 0000
Suicide Down to Zero

OUR GOAL

We aim to enable a paradigm shift to occur in how suicide is viewed. It is acknowledged worldwide as a public health phenomenon that is preventable.

We want suicide to be viewed here as almost entirely preventable not inevitable.

We will collaborate with other like-minded groups and encourage the trial of new and innovative approaches and those which have proved successful elsewhere

Prayer Diary for December with verses from Isaiah and Luke 1-2

Dec 1 (Mon) Advent Begins Scripture: Isaiah 9:2

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned."

Reflection: Begin Advent with expectation.

God's light is coming into the darkness of the world.

Prayer: Lord, help me see Your light today and trust Your coming.

Dec 2 (Tue): Scripture: Isaiah 7:14

"Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel."

Reflection: God's promise of salvation is sure.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust Your promises, even when I cannot yet see them.

Dec 3 (Wed):

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Scripture: Luke 1:17 — "He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children."

Reflection: Pray for those marginalized or struggling. God's plan is for everyone.

Prayer: Lord, bring hope, comfort, and inclusion to all in need.

Dec 4 (Thurs): Scripture: Luke 1:18

"Zechariah asked the angel, 'How can I be sure of this?'"

Reflection: Faith grows even when doubt is present.

Prayer: Lord, strengthen my faith and patience as I wait for Your promises.

Dec 5 (Fri): Scripture: Luke 1:19

"I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news."

Reflection: God sends messengers of hope and guidance.

Prayer: Lord, speak to me today and guide my steps in Your light.

Dec 6 (Sat): St. Nicholas Day (The original Santa Claus)

Scripture: Luke 1:24 — "After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion."



Reflection: Celebrate generosity, love, and kindness, following St. Nicholas' example.

Prayer: Lord, help me share Your love generously, like St. Nicholas.

Dec 7 (Sun) Scripture: Luke 1:28

"Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." **Reflection:**

Rejoice in God's favour and the coming of the Messiah.

Prayer: Lord, help me respond with joy to Your calling.

Dec 8 (Mon): Scripture: Luke 1:30

"Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God."

Reflection: Mary's obedience shows faith in God's plan.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust Your plan for my life.

Dec 9 (Tues): Scripture: Luke 1:31

"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus."

Reflection: God's promises bring hope and joy.

Prayer: Lord, let me see Your promises fulfilled in my life.

Dec 10 (Wed): Human Rights Day (UN)

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1–2 — "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit... filled with the Spirit of the Lord."

Reflection: Pray for justice and peace in the world.

Prayer: Lord, may Your Spirit bring peace, justice, and righteousness to all.

Dec 11 (Thurs): Scripture: Luke 1:34

"How will this be...?"

Reflection: God's plans are often beyond understanding.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust Your wisdom and timing.

Dec 12 (Fri): Scripture: Luke 1:35

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

Reflection: God's power works even in humble circumstances.

Prayer: Lord, let Your power fill me to accomplish Your purposes.

Dec 13 (Sat): International Volunteer Day

Scripture: Luke 1:36 — "Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age..."

Reflection: God can do the impossible.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust in Your miracles and serve others faithfully.

Dec 14 (Sun): Scripture: Luke 1:39–40

"Mary set out and hurried to the hill country... and greeted Elizabeth."

Reflection: The joy of God's promises grows when shared.

Prayer: Lord, help me bring encouragement and hope to others.

Dec 15 (Mon):

Scripture: Luke 1:41

"When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb."

Reflection:

Joy grows when we encounter God's presence.

Prayer: Lord, let my heart leap with joy at Your presence today.



*And, blessed is the fruit
of your womb*

Dec 16 (Tues): Scripture: Luke 1:45

"Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!"

Reflection: Faith in God produces joy.

Prayer: Lord, increase my faith and trust in Your promises.

Dec 17 (Wed): Scripture: Isaiah 40:3

"A voice of one calling: 'In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord...'"

Reflection: Pray for safety and justice for all marginalized people.

Prayer: Lord, prepare Your way of peace and protection for the vulnerable.

Dec 18 (Thur): Scripture: Luke 1:46–47

"My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Reflection: Joy comes from recognizing God's salvation.

Prayer: Lord, fill my spirit with praise and joy today.

Dec 19 (Fri): Scripture: Luke 1:76

"You will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him."

Reflection: God calls each of us to prepare the world for His coming.

Prayer: Lord, guide me to prepare the way for others to meet You.

Dec 20 (Sat) Scripture: Luke 2:1–3

The census brings Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

Reflection: God's timing is perfect; even small events fulfil His plan.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust Your timing in all things.

Dec 21 (Sun): Scripture: Luke 2:6–7

"She gave birth to her firstborn son... and laid him in a manger."

Reflection: God's joy arrives in humble ways.

Prayer: Lord, help me recognize Your presence even in simplicity and humility.

Dec 22 (Mon): Scripture: Luke 2:8–9 — "Shepherds were living out in the fields... the glory of the Lord shone around them."

Reflection: God's glory breaks through darkness.

Prayer: Lord, shine Your light into my life this Advent.

Dec 23 (Tue): Scripture: Luke 2:10

"I bring you good news of great joy for all the people."

Reflection: Christmas joy is for everyone.

Prayer: Lord, help me share Your joy with all people.

Dec 24 Christmas Eve Scripture: Luke 2:13–14

"A multitude of the heavenly host praising God."

Reflection:

Rejoice in heaven's glory breaking into our world.

Prayer: Lord, fill my heart with awe and praise this night.

Dec 25 Christmas Day Scripture: Luke 2:16–17

"The shepherds hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby."

Reflection: Christ has come — joy is revealed.

Prayer: Lord, may I celebrate the gift of Jesus with joy and wonder.

Dec 26 (Fri): Scripture: Isaiah 52:7

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news."

Reflection: Celebrate those who share Christ's story.

Prayer: Lord, help me bring the good news of Jesus to others.

Dec 27 (Sat): Scripture: John 1:14

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

Reflection: God's Word lives among us in Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, may Your presence dwell with me and in my home.

Dec 28 (Sun): Scripture: Luke 2:21

"The child was circumcised and named Jesus."

Reflection: God's promises continue even in hardship.

Prayer: Lord, help me trust Your ongoing plan and celebrate Your faithfulness.

Dec 29 (Mon): Scripture: Isaiah 9:6

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Reflection: Meditate on the titles of Christ — the fullness of His joy and authority.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, reveal Yourself to me in all Your greatness and bring peace to my heart.

Dec 30 (Tue): Scripture: Luke 2:19

"But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."

Reflection: Reflect on the wonder of God's work in our lives.

Prayer: Lord, help me treasure Your works and meditate on Your goodness as Mary did.

Dec 31 (Wed): Scripture: Isaiah 40:31

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES: PARISH HALL / UPPER AREA



• **Mondays**

9.30am Pitter Patter (Main Hall) Mums & Tots
Off Dec 22 / 29 Back Jan 5

- 10.30am Craft & Chatter (Upper Area)
Off Dec 22 / 29

- 6.30pm Rainbows & Brownies
(Woodrow Room Upper Area, Main Hall)
Off Dec 22 / 29 & Jan 5

• **Tuesdays**

6.45pm Pause & Restore (Upper Area)
Off Dec 16 / 23 / 30 Back Jan 6th

- Bowls 7.30pm Off December 23 / 30

• **Wednesdays**

8.00am - 8.30am Slimming World Weigh In
9.00am Class (Woodrow Room) Not off any date

- 9.45 - 12.45pm Patricia's Sewing Class
In on Dec 3 / 17 back on 3rd Jan (Upper Area)

- 6.00pm & 7.00pm Broadway Boogie Fitness
(Main Hall) off Dec 24 / 31

- Badminton Club 8.00pm Off December 24 / 31

• **Thursdays**

9.30am Happy Hatchlings
(Baby Massage in Woodrow Room)
Off Dec 25 / 1st Jan

- 10.00am - 12.45pm Patricia's Sewing Class
December in 4 / 11 (Upper Area)

- 2.00pm - 4.00pm Ladies Hen Shed
In December 4 / 18

- 6.45 Beavers, Cubs, Scouts (Parish Hall)
Off December 25 / Jan 1st

• **Fridays**

10.00am Patricia's Sewing class. (Upper Area)
On December 12th

- 6.00pm Inspire Dance Company (Main Hall)
Off December 19 / 26

Holy Communion Wednesdays

Parish Church 10.00am (not Dec 24/31)

Women's Institute

Wednesday December 12th @ 7.45pm (Monthly)

Wednesday Welcome

December 10th 10.30am (Upper Area)

Mothers' Union (Monthly)

December 2 Tuesday @ 7.30pm
Christmas fun and food

Select Vestry

December 9 December
Tuesday @ 7.30pm Vicarage

**Foodbank
collection
Sunday 14 Dec
8.30 & 10.00am**



**Ballynahinch Food Bank
Christmas requirements**

**Large tins of Ham,
Tins both fruit & vegetables,
Jelly, Cranberry Sauce, Gravy granules,
Tomato Ketchup, Soft drinks,
Shortbread, Tins of biscuits,
Brown sauce, Sugar, Mustard,
Soup mix, UHT milk,
Selection boxes, Crisps, Nuts, Tinfoil,
Kitchen rolls, Christmas Puddings,
Tinned custard,
Rice pudding, Mince pies, Cooking oil.**

If you wish to donate money, we
can take that and transfer it to
their account. Thank you so much

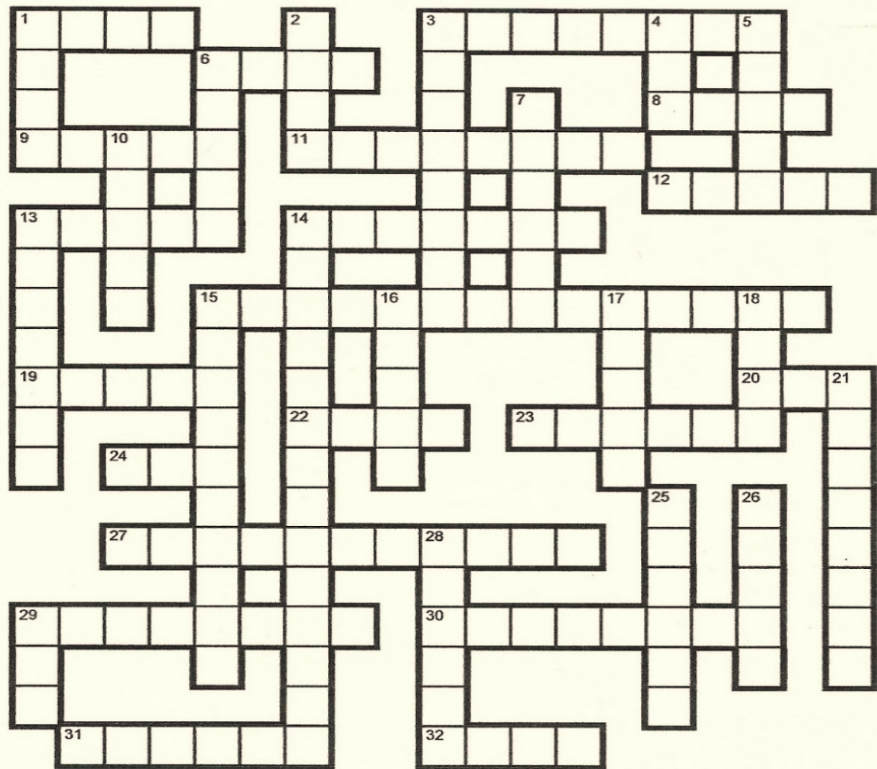


CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 Transportation for going over snow (4)
 3 Mixture of seasoned ingredients (8)
 6 Baby's bed (4)
 8 Period from December 24th to January 6th (4)
 9 Red-breasted bird (5)
 11 Twelve days after Christmas (8)
 12 Alcoholic drink normally served in a bowl (5)
 13 Jolly (5)
 14 News (7)
 15 Goes with the turkey (9,5)

- 19 A type of tree used at Christmas (5)
 20 The colour of Santa's hat (3)
 22 ____ log; traditonally burned at Christmas (4)
 23 Sanctified (6)
 24 Cured leg of pork (3)
 27 Christmas song (6,5)
 29 Found under the Christmas tree? (8)
 30 Grace (8)
 31 Snow falls in this season (6)
 32 Given at Christmas (4)



BiblePuzzles.org.uk

Down

- 1 Bright celestial body (4)
 2 Christmas tree type (4)
 3 Take aback (8)
 4 No room here! (3)
 5 Elvish colour (5)
 6 Sweets; flavoured sugar (5)
 7 Container usually found in a stable (6)
 10 Beginning of life (5)
 13 Amazing event (7)
 14 Written after Christmas? (5,3,6)
 15 Formal events (10)

- 16 Ring out from churches (5)
 17 Accompaniment for food (5)
 18 Printed or written greeting (4)
 21 Month in which Christmas falls (8)
 25 Nature of God (6)
 26 One was born in Bethlehem (5)
 28 Sweetened milk drink, with eggs and alcohol (6)
 29 Pastry dish (3)

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON PAGE 11

REFRESH: SUNDAY 14TH 10.00AM & CHRISTMAS DAY 10.00AM

Spot the difference - Find 6 things



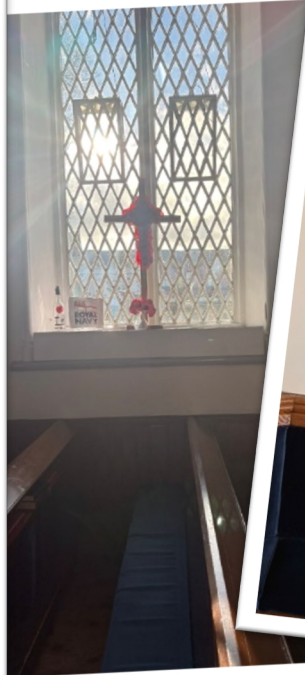
FOLLOW THE LINK FOR A FUN QUIZ TO PLAY AS A FAMILY

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Unique Holiday customs.

- Venezuela -**
People roller skate to early morning Christmas church services
- Germany-**
A pickle ornament is hidden on the Christmas tree. The person who finds it gets an extra gift.
- Ukraine**
Christmas is celebrated on January 7 and some traditions include food being thrown onto the ceiling for good luck!
- India –**
Mango or banana trees are decorated for Christmas.
- Japan-**
It is common to eat KFC for Christmas dinner.
- In Poland-**
The Christmas eve meal, Wigilia, features 12 meatless dishes to honour the 12 apostles.
- Finland-**
Rice porridge with a hidden almond is a Christmas morning tradition.
- Netherlands –**
St Nicholas' Day is Dec 6th
but on Christmas Eve Children put their shoes by the fireplace in the hope of receiving treats from Saint Nicholas (Sinter Klass)

PARISH NEWS



Thank you for your kindness in the donations for the British Legion and R.U.C. Benevolent Fund on Remembrance Sunday.
We sent £350 to each charity.

Thank you to William, Ian and Graham for decorating the church so beautifully for our Remembrance Worship.

Welcome to Gerry

We want to thank Gerry Lavery for stepping up to the 'Welcomer' Role at 8.30am Communion. Denis has stepped down after 7 loyal years, and we have been very blessed with his service and commitment.



THE SUITCASE PROJECT



A big thank you to everyone who helped at and supported this event. We raised £900 for this need



"You also, like living stone, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." — 1 Peter 2:5

In all my years of ministry in all churches, I can honestly say this is a *new* experience — to be part of a parish family celebrating 250 years of worship, witness, and service. It is a once-in-a-lifetime milestone — a moment for all to look back with deep gratitude and to look forward with renewed purpose and faith.

The verse from 1 Peter reminds us that we are not simply celebrating a building, but a *people* — "living stones," shaped by the hand of God, joined together in Christ, and built into a spiritual house that endures through the generations. Our ancestors laid the foundations of faith here through prayer, generosity, and service. Now, in our time, we are called to continue that holy work — to build not just walls or programmes, but a Jesus community, alive with worship, compassion and hope.

As we mark this 250th Anniversary, we do so with hearts full of thanksgiving — for the faithfulness of those who came before us, and for the countless lives touched by God's presence through the ministry of this parish. Yet gratitude alone is not enough. Anniversaries are also invitations: to rediscover who we are, to renew our calling and to prepare for what God will do next.

This celebration will unfold across the coming year, with a diary of events that honour both our heritage and our future. Among the highlights will be our **History Day**, which will seek to re-tell with the community of 250 years and a **Christmas Tree Festival** next year — a brilliant expression of light and life in Christ as we draw the anniversary year to a close.

These events and many others will require helping hands, creative minds, and willing hearts.

So this is also a heartfelt call — for volunteers of all ages, organisers, bakers, stewards, workers, movers of tables as well as dreamers — all *living stones* ready to play their part in building something lasting and beautiful.

Whether you have been here all your life or have only recently joined our Church, there is a place for you in this celebration. As we journey through this anniversary year, may we do so with a spirit of joy and thankfulness, but also of courage and commitment — trusting that the same God who built the foundations long ago will continue to build His Church in and through us today.

Let us be these living stones — grateful for the past, grounded in the present and growing toward God's future. May Saintfield Parish, built on Christ our cornerstone, continue to be a spiritual house — alive, prayerful, and ready for what comes next.

Blessings Chris

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Sunday 11 January 10.00am

Opening Celebration Worship

Re-dedication of our faith for All Ages.



Saturday 8 March 10.30am

The story of our Stained-Glass Window

Sunday 22 March 11.00am

Our 250th Celebration Worship

Preacher: Archbishop of Armagh

The Most Reverend John McDowell

Followed by a Celebration Parish Lunch



Holy Week: Easter Transformations

Every Evening 7.30pm Guest Speakers

Monday 31 March – Good Friday

Saturday 13 June

10.00am – 4.00pm

Saintfield Parish/Community

History Day



September Friday 12,13,14

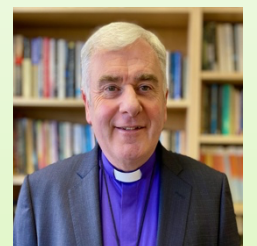
Prayer 24/7 experience in Church

Sunday 11 October 10.00am

250th Harvest Thanksgiving

Bishop of Down & Dromore

Rt Rev David McClay



Sunday 8 November 10.00am

Remembrance involving

community poppies

Friday 4 – Sat 5 – Sun 6 December

Christmas Tree Festival in Church



Christmas Carols & Worship

Wellington Silver Band

251th Year So....what's next God?

Sunday 10 January 2027 10.00am

Closing 250th Thanksgiving Worship

Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today & forever

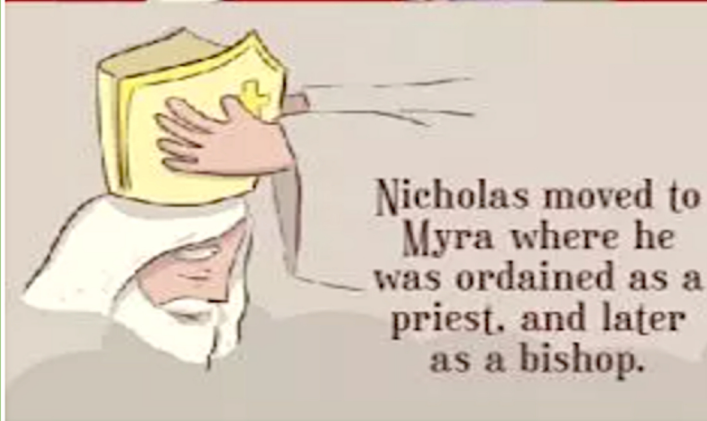


THE STORY OF ~~SANTA CLAUS~~

St. Nicholas



St. Nicholas of Bari was born in Lycia (today's Turkey). From an early age he was a very generous person, especially towards the poor. He also had the custom of giving secret gifts to children.



Nicholas moved to Myra where he was ordained as a priest, and later as a bishop.

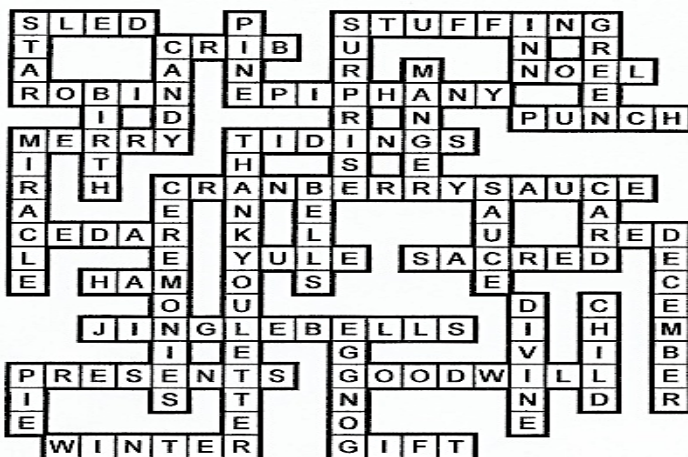
He was imprisoned during the Diocletian persecution and only released when Constantine the Great came to power.



St. Nicholas is associated with Christmas because of his tradition of giving secret gifts to children. His feast day is on the 6th of December.

We celebrate him on December 25th

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD - SOLUTION



Across: 1 Sled, 3 Stuffing, 6 Crib, 8 Noel, 9 Robin, 11 Epiphany, 12 Punch, 13 Merry, 14 Tidings, 15 Cranberry sauce, 19 Cedar, 20 Red, 22 Yule, 23 Sacred, 24 Ham, 27 Jingle Bells, 29 Presents, 30 Goodwill, 31 Winter, 32 Gift.

Down: 1 Star, 2 Pine, 3 Surprise, 4 Inn, 5 Green, 6 Candy, 7 Manger, 10 Birth, 13 Miracle, 14 Thank you letter, 15 Ceremonies, 16 Bells, 17 Sauce, 18 Card, 21 December, 25 Divine, 26 Child, 28 Eggnog, 29 Pie.

CONTACTS

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Tuesday - Friday
9.00am - 2.00pm
(Fri @ 12.30pm)

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William Drury 02897 561451



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**Material for January 2026 to be with Leonard
by 14thth December 2025**



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