

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



*This is the month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born.*

John Milton : Ode On The Morning Of Christ's Nativity



DECEMBER 2025



CONTENTS



From The Rector's Desk	4
Parish Notices	5, 6, 7
The Lights of Christmas by Paul McLaughlin	8
Rector's Address at the Funeral of Doreen Devenney	10
Poets Corner	12
Music List	13
Calendar	15
Centenary of the Death of Queen Alexandra (1844-1925) by Jack McCormick	18

St George's Parish Magazine is published on the Sunday nearest the first day of the month, except August and January. Please send contributions to the Parish Office at stgeorgesoffice@btconnect.com. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the parish.

Editorial Team: William Odling-Smee, Selby Nesbitt, Tony Merrick.

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

We are now in the season of Advent, which looks forward to the coming of Christ. It looks forward not only to the approach of Christmas and the celebration of one of the central beliefs of Christianity - the Incarnation, God made flesh in Jesus, but also in the belief that, at some time Christ will come again as set out in the creeds. Christians have professed belief in the Second Coming for 2000 years and because two millennia have passed since Christ's first advent, some Christians have either ignored the Second Coming or else have indulged in endless speculation and constant predictions about when it might be. Jesus made it perfectly clear in the Gospels that such speculations were worthless, as the timing of the Second Coming is God's decision and we will not know until it happens. Our task is to always be prepared and will work for the building of God's Kingdom on earth in our time.

The timetable of the various services through Advent, Christmas and Epiphany is set out in this magazine. Please take note of those, especially the wonderful Carol Services on the 21st December and 11th January, both at 5:00 PM.

We place great demands upon the musicians and choir in these seasons and expected great things from them, and we are never disappointed but our appreciation is best shown by our attendance at choral services and wholehearted participation in singing hymns and carols. I know that the Director of Music and choir members also appreciate words of thanks and encouragement from the congregation for all their efforts and hard work. They do not seek plaudits or praise because they enjoy their singing and it is all to the glory of God, but words of appreciation and thanks are always appropriate. This is especially important because so much of the music and choral heritage of the Church of Ireland has been sadly lost either through apathy or because of the deliberate policy. We are so blessed in St George's to still have vibrant and growing choirs and a very strong commitment to musical excellence, which is at its best over the Christmas period. Please do support and encourage this key aspect of our Christian life and witness in St George's.

May I wish you all a very holy Advent and a blessed Christmas to come.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Brian Stewart

**ADVENT, CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY
SERVICE LIST 2025 / 2026**

4th Sunday of Advent (21 December 2025)

11:00am Choral Eucharist

5:00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas Eve (24 December 2025)

11:00pm Midnight Festival Eucharist

Christmas Day (25 December 2025)

9:30am Eucharist

11:00am Choral Festival Eucharist

St Stephen's Day (26 December 2025)

1:00pm Eucharist

St John the Evangelist (27 December 2025)

1:00pm Eucharist

The Holy Innocents (28 December 2025)

9:30am Eucharist; 11:00am Eucharist

5:00pm Evening Prayer

2nd Sunday of Christmas (4 January 2026)

9:30am Eucharist; 11:00am Choral Eucharist

5:00pm Evening Prayer

1st Sunday of Epiphany (11 January 2026)

9:30am Eucharist; 11:00am Choral Eucharist

5:00pm Epiphany Carol Service



Choir Concert

19TH DECEMBER

This year the Christmas Concert will feature a candlelit setting with sacred music by the Parish Choir and the SSA Choir. Each choir will sing 4 pieces and the first half will end with “O Holy Night” with Maeve singing with the parish choir.

The second half will feature Choral Christmas hits and a jazz improvisation on the ‘O antiphons.

The concert will be followed by Drinks and Christmas Treats in the Parish Hall to which everyone is welcome.

Admission is free, but donations to the Choir Fund may be made in the yellow gift aid envelopes provided at the end of each pew, and also on the Card Machine at the back of the church.

PARISH NOTICES

Saint George's Singers

Saint George's Sinfonia and Soloists
present

J.S. BACH's
Christmas Oratorio
(Parts 1,2 and 3 - sung in English)



Wednesday 10th December at 7.30pm

Saint George's Church, High Street, Belfast

Seasonal refreshments following the concert

Tickets £25 (Students £15)

available from Choir Members and at the door

or send Email to: contactstgeorges@gmail.com

THE LIGHTS OF CHRISTMAS

by Paul McLaughlin



Our late mother once described the lights she was weaving delicately around our humble Christmas tree as ‘little prayers of hope and joy’ to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus. Simple words that an eight-year-old could understand and, thankfully, remember and a far cry from the glitz and glam of the hi-tech illuminations of today.

My wife and I took a right turn off the main road and headed straight down memory lane past a little piece of my Christmas past.

The tiny corner shop has become a gentlemen’s barber, but the banner sign above the side window, despite an interval of around 65 Christmases, is as clear as it has remained in my memory.

‘Vision and Radio’ it reads, with the very faintest of trade names, ‘Pifco’, which was painted below; now sadly lost. That word alone is, all at once, like a magical incantation, a charm and an enchantment as the years are rolled away. We stop and I remember that little boy staring into a window of wonder. School is just around the corner and my bus stop is outside this mystical place where strings of fairy lights, in go-green, stop-red and a rainbow of other colours, border the large shop-window of the ‘electric shop’. Festooned in red baize and Daz-white cotton wool, it is a winter-wonderland of radios, hairdryers, kettles and toasters. And, of course, boxes of Christmas lights.

There are none of those insignificant little, warm-white LED pinpricks that have drained the joy and dazzle from my idea of tree decorations, but rather handfuls and clusters of giant C9 bulbs that sing out in multi-coloured beams that Christmas is only a fortnight away.

We have made hanging decorations from cotton spools, string and scraps of assorted crepe paper in the classroom and my fingers, the least creative in a class of more than 40 boys, smell of almonds from the white, gooey glue that I have managed to stick practically everywhere but the paper.

Our teacher, Miss Thompson, has told us we can bring home

samples of our work for our families to enjoy. I have hidden mine in my schoolbag. They will decorate the bin at the corner of Oakman Street before I head for the bus. Even at that tender age, I recognised my practical inadequacies and did not want my poor mother to have to lie about the merits of my efforts.

Our tree was taken down from the glory hole that afternoon. It was artificial and my father said that it was the future. “The way things are going, all the **real** trees will be gone when you boys are grown up”, he said to my brother and me, “So we have to make the best of these fake fellas”.

I remember that ‘fella’ as a grand Scots Pine or a Douglas Fir, strung with glass balls, little blue birds, our favourite robin and dark-chocolate figures filled with gummy white cream and wrapped in silver-paper Santa suits, but he was much more modest as I discovered when my father consigned him to the bin just a couple of years later.

Probably only four feet tall as I remember now and less like a real fir tree as it was possible to be. His branches, it was always referred to as a ‘he’ for some strange reason, were basic and broom-like and more akin to clothes brushes than anything mother nature might have nurtured.

But..... he was lit to perfection. Dressed to thrill with just two dozen or so of those multi-coloured bulbs, more than 2 inches tall and ripe in colour as any fruit that ever hung on a tree, blessing the baubles that he held by the armful.

Each year, our mother made a little ceremony of the dressing of the tree. A wee prayer before, a lot of patience during and her smile that made the afterwards a delight.

“The little baby Jesus will become the light of the world”, she said and I remember how we stood silently for a moment, our eyes shining with excitement, as she stretched to place one of the bulbs under a plastic star.

A crowning light for Christmas and a modest family prayer of hope and joy for all.

The Rector's Address at the Funeral of Doreen Devenney.

'Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.' Jesus spoke these words to reassure his friends on the night before his crucifixion. He wanted to comfort and reassure them and tell them to have faith in him.

Doreen was a strong woman, a great wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother and dear friend to so many. She was also a woman of strong faith who loved greatly and was greatly loved in return.

The last time I saw her in hospital, just a day or so before she died, as I prayed with her, she joined in Psalm 23, along with me, word for word and in the Lords Prayer. She knew fully that she did not have long to live, and she accepted that. She had lived a long and full life with much love and compassion. She was at peace and content to leave herself in God's hands. It was enough for her and should be for each of us.

Doreen was born in 1932 into a colourful and interesting family background. She was one of eight children with three sisters and four brothers. Her famous grandmother, MA Copley, ran travelling fairs and was a celebrated boxing promoter, and so Doreen was born 'on the road', as it were, in a caravan at Ards Football Ground. Her mother was a refugee from Lithuania, her father, one of the Copley's from England.

Home for Doreen was the Donegal Pass, where both her maternal and paternal grandparents lived. St Mary Magdalene was the family church.

Garth and Doreen fell in love and were married in 1967 and despite making their home here in St George's always kept a close interest in the Magdalene Church on Donegal Pass. Through their son Phillip and his wife Debbie, they gained four grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren, all of whom she adored and spoilt.

Doreen and Garth were much beloved here in St George's where Doreen was much involved in the Mothers' Union and with the Flower Arranging for many years. She took me under her wing in various ways when I arrived as a young Rector 31 years ago and was unafraid to put me right about certain

things when she thought I was not on the right track. Doreen spoke her mind, and you were in no doubt about what she thought. I am sure that there are many here today who had that experience!

Doreen and Garth were very faithful attenders at the early Holy Communion Service every Sunday until last year when frailty prevented them from coming. On my visits to bring her Holy Communion at home, she always asked about my family, St George's and her many friends here. She had a great gift for making friends, making people feel welcome and for being genuinely interested in others. She was also great crack and loved to laugh.

Doreen was generous and kind not only to her family, but to friends and those in need. She often gave me money for the Discretionary Fund, which we used to help the homeless and those in need.

She was involved in the Unionist Party along with Garth, but her politics were broad and in no way sectarian. She epitomised the very best of that tradition, generous, not narrow and respectful of all.

As we take our earthly farewell of during today, we do so with great thanksgiving to God for giving her to us all for so long. We thank God for her strong faith, for the great love she had for all her family and for the friendship she built with so many people over her 93 years.

We extend our deepest and prayerful sympathies to Garth, to Phillip and Debbie, and to all Doreen's grandchildren and great grandchildren, and to her brother Henry.

Make she rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

Mother Christmas

By Paul McLaughlin

Long after Santa's letter lost its grasp
Of boyhood dreams and everything I eyed
I realised I only had to ask
And parents out of love would soon provide.

The swathe of twinkling tinsel round the tree
Completes the seasonal circle of the year
And Advent's shopping pilgrimage for me
I hope fulfilled now Christmas morn is here

But nowhere sits my silver Raleigh bike
My Mother's words still echo in my ears
You cannot have it every way you like
For danger lurks with Sturmeys Archer gears

'Tis better to be safe and worry free
And this Instamatic camera is ideal
To capture and retain all that you see
And maybe show you what is really real

A neighbour's son had perished on the road
Just days before the Saviour babe appears
His Christmas cycle lost beneath four wheels
A mangled cross another Mother bears.

MUSIC LIST December 2025

Sunday 7th December

Advent 2

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	19 (Omit *)
Setting	Missa Secunda - <i>Hassler</i>
Psalm	72: 1-7, 18.19
Gradual Hymn	18
Offertory Hymn	17
Communion Hymn	275
Motet	The Advent Prose - <i>Weir</i>
Recessional Hymn	16

5:00PM Choral Evensong

Choral Scholars

Responses	Tallis
Psalm	11
Canticles	Arnold Fauxbourdons
Anthem	Advent Sequence
Hymns	55, 10

Sunday 14th December

Advent 3

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	12
Setting	Canterbury Mass - <i>Piccolo</i>
Psalm	146: 4-10
Gradual Hymn	8
Offertory Hymn	7
Communion Hymn	292
Anthem	This is the record of John - <i>Gibbons</i>
Recessional Hymn	33 (Omit*)

5:00PM Choral Evensong

Chamber Choir

Responses	Tallis
Psalm	12
Canticles	Gibbons Short Service
Anthem	How beautiful upon the mountains <i>Stainer</i>
Hymns	1, 6

MUSIC LIST December 2025

Friday 19th December

7:30PM CHOIR CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Sunday 21st December

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Advent 4

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	186
Setting	Mass for five voices - <i>Byrd</i>
Psalm	80: 1-8, 18-20
Gradual Hymn	21
Offertory Hymn	33
Communion Hymn	180
Anthem	The Truth from above - <i>RVW</i>
Recessional Hymn	185

5:00PM Carol Service

Parish Choir

Wednesday 24th December

11:00PM Midnight Eucharist

Christmas Eve

Parish Choir

Setting	Little Organ Mass - <i>Haydn</i>
Motet	In dulci jubilo - <i>Praetorius</i>
Anthem	O Holy Night - <i>Adam</i>

Thursday 25th December

11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Christmas Day

Parish Choir

Processional Hymn	32
Setting	Darke in F
Psalm	96
Gradual Hymn	40
Offertory Hymn	25
Communion	Carols
Anthem	In the bleak midwinter - <i>Darke</i>
Recessional Hymn	30

CALENDAR December 2025

Dec 3

FRANCIS XAVIER

10:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

Dec 7

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:00AM

Holy Eucharist: The Rector

Broadcast Service on BBC Radio Ulster

11.00AM

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 11: 1-10; Romans 15: 4-13;
Matthew 3: 1-12

Reader: *Wardens*

Intercessor: *Anne McBride*

Servers: *Banji Akinyele, Steven McQuitty,
Jonny Calder*

Tea and Coffee: *Valerie Roberts, Helen Crowe,
Holly Ferres*

5.00PM

Choral Evensong:

Lessons: 1 Kings 18: 17-39; John 1: 19-28
(*Janet Sandikli*)

Dec 10

FERIA

10:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

Concert by St George's Singers - 7.30pm 

Dec 10

***S* Bach's Christmas Oratorio** (*See page 7*)

Dec 14

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00AM

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 35: 1-10; James 5: 7-10;
Matthew 11: 2-11

Reader: *George Woodman*

Intercessor: *George Woodman*

Servers: *Omolewa Akinyele, Agape Laoye,
Tony Merrick*

Tea and Coffee: *Julie, Issy Bannon*

CALENDAR December 2025

Dec 14

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

5.00PM

Choral Evensong: The Rector

Lessons: Isaiah 5: 8-30; Acts 13: 13-41
(*Geoffrey May*)

Dec 17

EGLANTINE JEBB

10:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

Dec 19

Parish Choir Concert - 7.30pm (*See page 6*)

Dec 21

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

9:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00AM

Choral Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 7: 10-16; Romans 1: 1-7;
Matthew 1: 18-25

Reader: *Karen Brett*

Intercessor: *Pam Tilson*

Servers: *Janet Sandikli, Tony Merrick, Jonny Calder.*

Tea and Coffee: *Yvonne Doherty, Linda McConnell*

5.00PM

Nine Lessons & Carols: The Rector

Dec 24

FERIA

10:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

Dec 24

CHRISTMAS EVE

11.00PM

Midnight Festival Eucharist: The Rector

Reader: Wardens

Intercessor: The Rector

Servers: *Jonny Calder, Banji Akinyele, Tony Merrick*

CALENDAR December 2025

Dec 25

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

9:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00AM

Choral Festival Eucharist: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 9: 2-7; Titus 2: 11-14;
Luke 2: 1-14

Sanctuary Flowers: Christmas Festival
Flowers

Reader: *Wardens*

Intercessor: *The Rector*

Servers: *Mark Claney*

Dec 26

ST STEPHEN'S DAY

1:00PM

Eucharist: The Rector

Dec 27

THE HOLY INNOCENTS

1:00PM

Eucharist: The Rector

Dec 28

1ST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

9:30AM

Eucharist: The Rector

11.00AM

Eucharist: The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 63: 7-9; Hebrews 2: 10-18;
Matthew 2: 13-23

Sanctuary Flowers: Christmas Festival
Flowers

Reader: *Mark Claney*

Intercessor: *Fr Tom Layden*

Servers: *Banji Akinyele, Janet Sandikli,
Mark Claney,*

Tea and Coffee: *Betty Flynn, Dot Lutton*

5.00PM

Evening Prayer: The Rector

Lessons: Isaiah 49: 7-13; Philippians 2: 1-11
(*Fr Graeme Pollock*)

Dec 31

JOHN WYCLIF

1:00PM

Eucharist: The Rector

THE CENTENARY OF THE DEATH OF QUEEN ALEXANDRA (1844 – 1925)



The 20th of November marked the Centenary of the death of Alexandra, our late Queen. A hundred years later, her memory lingers like a faint perfume from another age; unmistakably of its time, yet curiously evergreen.

Alexandra of Denmark, born in 1844, rose from beginnings far more modest than the splendour she later knew. Raised in a loving but financially strained Copenhagen household, which was once dubbed “the poorest royal house in Europe”, she learned simplicity and resilience early. Arriving in Britain as the young bride of the future King Edward VII, she faced Victorian scrutiny with quiet poise. Contemporary

writers called her “modest, affectionate, and naturally gracious” (Battiscombe, *Queen Alexandra*, 1969). *Yet beneath that gentleness lay a sturdy inner resolve shaped by hardship and sustained by grace.*

From her early twenties, Alexandra lived with a pronounced limp caused by rheumatic fever. In an era when physical imperfection was harshly judged, she refused to shrink herself or disguise her gait. Instead, she walked publicly with confidence. Her example softened Victorian attitudes toward disability; she normalised the visible realities of illness simply by moving through the world without shame. As the historian Richard Hough rightly noted, “Alexandra carried her infirmity with a queen’s poise, and by her very candour changed more hearts than legislation ever could” (*Edward & Alexandra*, 1992).

Her tenderness toward others was equally striking. Her friendship with Joseph Merrick, the “Elephant Man”, stands as a shining example. Visiting him at the London Hospital, she addressed him with dignity, kindness, and equality. Dr. Treves

remarked that Merrick “blushed like a boy” at her gentleness, a rare moment of joy in a life marked by cruelty.

Alexandra’s Christian faith, shaped first by the Danish Lutheran Church and then deepened through Anglican devotion, shaped a lifetime of service: hospitals, seafarers’ missions, homes for the vulnerable, and the Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service, founded in 1884. During the Boer War and the First World War, she became, in Jane Ridley’s words, “a symbol of constancy for a nation that had begun to shake” (*The Heir Apparent*, 2013). And yet, her greatest legacy may be her quiet humanity; the way she carried her own frailty with grace and recognised the sacred worth of those who bore heavier burdens.

In her widowhood after Edward VII’s death in 1910, Alexandra withdrew increasingly from public life, though she remained a beloved figure. She divided her time between Sandringham and her house at Marlborough, surrounding herself with family, animals, and the charities she continued to support quietly. Her style of retreat echoed the Victorian model of dignified seclusion, yet her presence was still felt in the nation’s affections.

On 20 November 1925, Alexandra died peacefully at Sandringham, aged 81. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin moved an humble Address of condolence to King George V, expressing the Commons’ “*deep sympathy with His Majesty in the loss of his beloved mother.*” The motion was seconded by Opposition leader Ramsay MacDonald, and unanimously agreed. The nation mourned deeply: thousands lined the streets as her coffin was borne to Windsor, where she was laid to rest beside Edward VII in St George’s Chapel. Newspapers of the day spoke of her “gentle dignity” and “unfailing sympathy,” qualities that had endeared her to rich and poor alike.

Queen Alexandra’s death a century ago marked the end of the Edwardian age’s queenly presence. Her late Majesty is remembered for the quiet radiance of a life lived for others.

O Lord our God, who didst grant to Thy servant Alexandra, our late Queen, a quiet spirit and a heart inclined to mercy: Grant that, remembering her, we may give Thee due thanks and follow all things honest and of good report. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Jack McCormick

