

# Christmas Newsletter 2023

*Newsletter for the Grouped Parishes of Swords, Clonmethan, and Kilsallaghan, with Donabate and Lusk*



## Hello & Welcome!

On behalf of Revd Neal Phair, I am delighted to welcome you to your Christmas Newsletter.

*“Last Christmas, I gave you my heart. But the very next day, you gave it away. This year, to save me from tears I’ll give it to someone special.” George Michael / Wham* One of my favourite Christmas songs, Wham's *Last Christmas*.

The year draws to an end, as we say Goodbye to 2023 and welcome in 2024. Looking back at the year, it has been

challenging and difficult in some ways, but with our friendship, warmth and love that we share together as a Christian family, and most of all with the Hope of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we can celebrate and rejoice, in not the Hope, but the knowledge that Jesus was born unto the world. As I listen to the radio which blasts out “*Last Christmas*”, I ponder and think, what was I doing Last Christmas? Can any of us remember? As I get older the years seem to pass like months!

Looking back over the year, we witnessed war and disasters. The war in Ukraine with Russia continues from February 2022. In October, we witnessed the horrific attack on Israel by Hamas and the continuing war that has ensued. The loss of life, any life, is tragic, but watching media channels and seeing innocent children being killed in Gaza is horrific, simply beyond words.

We also are seeing weather events and as I write another Volcano issue in Iceland, which thankfully resolved.

That said there was plenty of good news stories in 2023, the success of our Ireland Rugby team, although not passing the Quarter final, was still an outstanding performance. We witnessed and assisted in Baptisms within Swords and Donabate Parishes, and our accounts managed somehow to survive another year. We celebrated and remembered in St Mary’s Clonmethan and also The Island Golf Club. A particular note of thanks to Minister Darragh O’Brien TD with our work on St Columba’s historic buildings and also my former Classmate and friend Councillor Adrian Henchy & Mayor of Fingal.



As we celebrate Christmas, we should be reminded of how fortunate we are to live in Ireland at this time and of people who are less fortunate. Contained within this end of year Newsletter, is a Christmas poem and some information on the late Revd Aldhouse, who served as a Chaplain in World War 1 and then Rector in St Mary's. I encourage you to take a few moments to read this poem and to reflect on your many blessings. I want to extend my

personal thanks to each of you for accepting me as your Parish Reader, in particular the Parishioners of St Patrick's, Donabate, whom up until June of this year, had not met or engaged with me. St Columba's, Swords, is my home Parish and a Church that I attended from circa 1975. I was also a student, attending the connected primary Old Borough National School, from 1977 to 1984. So I guess I am somewhat known in Swords. I would like to extend a particular note of thanks to Brian & Thelma Scott, Niall & Sarah Minto, Fred Elliott and Andrea Patterson, who assist me every weekend in both parishes. Also Andy Anderson, and Fran and Ian Falkiner who are always on hand in St David's, Killsallaghan.

We are also lucky to have Revd Neal Phair, Revd Norman Gamble, Revd Yvonne Ginnelly, Revd Lesley Robinson and Stephen Vincent, who are constantly working in the background to support all of our Churches.

As our Christmas Gift to anyone who cannot attend Church on Christmas Day, we have recorded a pre-Christmas Evening Service, which was held in St Patrick's Donabate and can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VH8Y5dkI6Q>

Finally on behalf of all our Parishes, we wish you all a very....

**Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year 2024**

**David Snow**

*Lay Ministry & Parish Reader  
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## **A Christmas Bible Reading:**

### **The Birth of Jesus**



**2** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2** (This was the first census that took place while<sup>[a]</sup> Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3** And everyone went to their own town to register.

**4** So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. **5** He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. **6** While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, **7** and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

**8** And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9** An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12** This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

**13** Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**14** “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

**15** When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

**16** So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17** When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18** and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



## **“Love is All Around”**



**by**

**Niall Minto**

As the classic Christmas film *"Love Actually"* suggests, love is all around us. However, what exactly is love? Love takes many forms. such as the love between a couple, the love of a child, grandchild, niece, nephew, the love of a parent, sibling, aunt, uncle, cousin, friend, neighbour and a beloved pet. The possibilities are endless, confirming that the song is right and that love is indeed all around us. So, what does love look like?

Perhaps love is best seen in the actions we do for each other. Love is the willingness to get up early to allow the other person sleep on or making sure the other person has a good lunch or giving up your last sweet when you really wanted to eat it yourself or letting the dog up on the new couch because they want to be beside you. Love is shown in the thoughtful things we do for each other.

The love, the relationships, the things we do for each other are often amplified at Christmas. Christmas is an opportunity to forge lasting memories with those we love, the individuals with whom we share meaningful connections. It may even be somebody that you sometimes find hard to like, yet you still hold dear the connection you have with them. Looking at love and our relationships, it is clear that the true wealth of a life isn't measured in material possessions but in the enduring connections cultivated with others along life's path. The message is clear: life revolves around the relationships we build, not the wealth or possessions gained and sometimes lost on the journey. It's a journey of love and human connections.

**Christingle celebrations in St Columba's Swords:**



On the evening of Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December, Stephen Vincent held a Christingle Service of joyful celebration that brings families and communities together to share the light of Jesus and spread a message of hope.

Some 40 children attended and had great fun whilst also spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. The Christmas festivities within the Parish was very much enjoyed by all who attended, both young and old.

Christingle celebrations are named after the Christingles that are lit during the ceremony. Christingles are oranges wrapped in red tape, decorated with dried fruit or sweets, with a candle on the top.

During the service, each person takes a Christingle and the candles are all lit to create a warm, magical glow symbolising the light of Christ and bringing hope to people living in darkness.

Christingles are made using oranges and a few other bits, as you choose. You light the candle at the end of a service to spread a magical glow around everyone.

Each element of a Christingle has a special meaning and helps to tell the Christian story:

*The orange represents the world*

*The red ribbon (or tape) symbolises the love and blood of Christ*

*The sweets and dried fruit represent all of God's creations*

*The lit candle represents Jesus's light in the world, bringing hope to people living in darkness.*

**Baptism and Service of Remembrance**



It was lovely to celebrate and welcome baby Felix into the Christian family in his Baptism with Rev Norman Gamble in Swords in October.

Congratulations to all his family, including those who came all the way from the USA!



We held a joint Ecumenical service of remembrance in The Island Golf Club Donabate, on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November in memory of all the members who have passed away. The service was with Fr Augustine Fokchet of Donabate Parish. A most emotional and respectful gathering of Christians who came to honour and remember their loved ones.

## Amazing work from the “Friends of Clonmethan” & commemorating those lost in war

On Saturday the 11<sup>th</sup> November, the friends of Clonmethan, arranged a remembrance occasion at



St Mary's Church, which closed in 1952. A great turnout of dignitaries and locals, and thankfully the sun shone. First in the running order was an unveiling of a plaque outside the main gate. Designed by Susan Flatley, it gives a short history of the site and links to this website.

The second event involved the cutting of a ribbon by Archbishop Michael Jackson and Minister of Housing and

TD Darragh O'Brien. Work was completed restoring the old tower on the Church and making it safe for future generations to enjoy and value.



Then at the rear of the Church, to mark Remembrance Day, the proceedings moved to a new monument to locals who died in the two world wars. Local poet Miriam Andrews read the [poem](#) Two Minutes Silence aloud, and wreaths were laid by Archbishop Jackson and Minister O'Brien. Local historian Paddy Finnegan did a roll call, which was followed by the last post played by James J McCaffery on bugle. Archbishop Jackson also gave a short oration.

In addition to those mentioned, the day's events were also attended by Adrian Henchy, Mayor of Fingal, and councillors Cathal Boland, Brian Dennehy, Larry Urell, Kim Rice conservation archaeologist, and Christine Baker, Heritage Officer FCC.

Well done to all involved a great event, with dignity and friendship afforded to all who paid the ultimate price. Check out the Friends of Clonmethan website: <https://clonmethan.org/>

## Rev Fredrick Aldhouse – St Mary’s Clonmethan



Revd Fredrick Aldhouse was a respected poet and started his Ministry in St Mary’s Church, Clonmethan in 1914. He was born in 1873 in Dublin and attended Trinity College receiving his BA in 1898 and MA in 1901.

Not long after he served as a Chaplain in The First World War in France, seeing what must have been horrific events. After the war he travelled to India and then returned to London in 1919, receiving the British War Medal. He returned to Clonmethan in

1919 serving there as Rector until his death in 1949.

Many other now-famous individuals served in World War 1, including Ernest Heminway, Edwin Hubble, Humphrey Bogart and JR Tolkien, author of the Lord of The Rings. His experience in WW1 inspired some of the images, we see in his now famous movies.

Rev Aldhouse penned this poem, which although sad, we should honour and remember his memory and contribution as a fellow member of our Parish. In 2021 Archbishop Michael Jackson, visited St Mary's and blessed Revd Aldhouse’s grave, which is located in the Church grounds, which are so kindly maintained by the friends of Clonmethan.

### *Christmas Memories by Rev F. Henry Aldhouse*

*Christmas, the children’s festival  
Is come again, in cot and hall  
Ivy and holly berry greet  
The Wonder-child, so fair and sweet,  
Who came on earth to love us all*

*To me, to many, Christmas brings  
The memory of joyful things  
Now passed from us beyond recall.  
Our loved ones gone as leaves that fall.  
A voice that now no longer sings,  
When others join the Christmas hymns.*

*O Babe of Bethlehem, I kneel,  
And worship, but my heart must feel  
A loneliness that will not go.  
I shall not let the children know,  
I still will smile at them and say,  
“A merry, merry Christmas Day.”*

*Dear Christ-Child give me strength to hide  
Sorrows that with me will abide  
To sing the carols with good grace  
In all the games to take my place  
The Shadow in my heart must stay  
I’ll hide it there on Christmas Day.*



## St David's Church, Kilsallaghan, Co. Dublin



When we think of our parish, it is normal for us to think of St Columba's Swords or St Patrick's Donabate, but we would be wise to remember our smaller Church in Kilsallaghan. This Church is a centuries-old church on an even more ancient ecclesiastical site. The Church is complemented by a magnificent [stained-glass window](#) which was commissioned by Harry Clarke, the stained-glass artist of An Túr Gloine fame, and was assembled by Michael Heaney (1873-1941), a pupil of Clarke's.



Saint David's Church receives great support from non-Church of Ireland people who live in the locality. The annual Carol Service held each December is notably a celebration for the whole community in this tranquil rural place of worship.

In writing this Newsletter, on behalf of the Parishioners and Vestry, I would like to recognise and extend a note of thanks to Andy Anderson, and Ian and Fran Falkner, who do such outstanding work to keep the Church alive with regular fund raising events and in caring for the Church.

During a recent visit to the Church, I came across a Bible, which was gift from St Columba's Vestry Swords, to Rose Cuthbert. This instantly catapulted me back to my early childhood when attending the "Old" Old Borough School, on Main Street, Swords. Rose Cuthbert used to provide us with religious education and also

Sunday School. A wonderful lady, who returned to the Lord in 1997; her grave is located in St. David's graveyard. I would recommend a visit to St David's Church; a service of Holy Communion takes places once a month.

# Some Memories from 2023



## **Consider a Certificate in Theology & Practice**

### **Certificate in Christian Theology & Practice**



The Church of Ireland Theological Institute, provides academic training with a Certificate in Christian Theology and Practice, which is run with Trinity Collage Dublin. This covers 6 individual modules over a 12 month period, including The Old and New Testament, The Creeds, Preparing to Lead Public Worship and Spirituality. There are also essays and plenty of interesting research with access to the Trinity library. I would encourage anyone to complete this course, which is most enjoyable and educational. The team of lecturers and instructors at the Theological Institute are excellent and truly gifted and providing education to people at all levels of academic

backgrounds. The food is also excellent and I remember with fondness the Services held within the Chapel.

#### *Register of Vestrypersons*

In early 2024, the two select vestries will each be updating their respective Register of Vestrypersons. If you or someone you know would like an application form, or you have any queries, ask a churchwarden for assistance.

#### *Remembering in our Prayers*

We remember all Parishioners and friends in our prayers and in particular those who are sick or are in need of assistance.

**Happy New Year 2024**