

# 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 2024

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

## FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK



Dear Friends in Christ,

This year Advent begins on Sunday, 1st December. The preacher at the 11:00AM Choral Eucharist will be the Rev'd Dr Keith Suckling. Our Advent Carol service will take place at 5:00PM on the same day, with the usual feast of Advent readings and music. This is one of the most evocative and beautiful services of the year and I would encourage you to come along. If you haven't attended our Advent Carol service before, then you are in for a treat. The Christmas service of Nine Lessons and Carols will be held on Sunday, 22nd December at 5:00PM and the Epiphany Carol Service will take place on Sunday, 5th January 2025 at 5:00PM. All three of these Carol services are wonderful occasions, each with their own unique music, emphasis and atmosphere. Please do put them in your diary and come along. All the other Advent Christmas services are listed in this month's magazine. I look forward to welcoming as many as possible to them and hopefully seeing old friends who are here for Christmas, as well as some new faces. Everyone will be very welcome at any or all of our services as we prepare for Christmas and welcome the birth of Christ.

I have already arranged quite a number of home Holy Communions for the sick and house bound. If you cannot get to St George's or if you know of someone who would like Holy Communion at home or anywhere else, then please contact me on 07902792080. I am very happy to bring the sacrament to anyone who cannot get to St George's over the next 4 weeks, or indeed at any time.

We will begin confirmation preparation for both adults and young people of secondary school age in January. Confirmation will be administered by our Bishop on Easter Eve, Saturday 19th April 2025 at 7:30PM. Anyone who is considering confirmation should speak to me before Christmas so we can arrange the classes. Parents of young people who want to know more about confirmation should also have a word with me. The classes are relaxed and will be age appropriate whether it is a class for young people or for adults.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a blessed Advent and a happy, holy and peaceful Christmas this year.

Yours sincerely in Christ

*Brian Stewart*



# ADVENT, CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY SERVICE LIST 2024 / 2025



ALL OTHER SERVICES AS USUAL OVER ADVENT CHRISTMAS & EPIPHANY

## **Advent Sunday (1 December 2024)**

11:00am Choral Eucharist  
5:00pm Advent Carol Service

## **4th Sunday of Advent (22 December 2024)**

11:00am Choral Eucharist  
5:00pm Nine Lessons and Carols

## **Christmas Eve (24 December 2024)**

11:00pm Midnight Festival Eucharist

## **Christmas Day (25 December 2024)**

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

## **St Stephen's Day (26 December 2024)**

1:00pm Eucharist

## **St John the Evangelist (27 December 2024)**

1:00pm Eucharist

## **The Holy Innocents (28 December 2024)**

1:00pm Eucharist

## **The First Sunday of Christmas (29 December 2024)**

9:30am Eucharist; 11:00am Eucharist  
5:00pm Evening Prayer

## **2nd Sunday of Christmas (5 January 2025)**

9:30am Eucharist; 11:00am Choral Eucharist  
5:00pm Epiphany Carol Service

## PARISH NOTICES

### CHOIR CONCERTS

#### **Friday, December 13th at 7:30pm.**

A candlelit concert of Christmas Music, will be performed by the choristers and gentlemen of the Parish Choir.

The concert features music selected by the congregation, in sponsorship of the **Organ Fund**, to which all proceeds from this event will go. (See page 9)

The concert will be followed by a reception of mulled wine and mince pies.

#### **Friday, December 20th at 7:30pm.**

The St George's SSA choir will perform music by Bingham, Biebl, Warlock and more, in a festive concert. Donations will be received in aid of **Belfast Women's Aid**. Please come along and support the choir and enjoy an evening of beautiful music, followed by a reception afterwards.

## PARISH NOTICES

### Saint George's Singers

Present

### *A Baroque Christmas Concert*

Music by Dietrich Buxtehude and Henry Purcell



*Adoration of the Magi* Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1646)

Wednesday 11th. December at 7.45pm

Saint George's Church, High Street, Belfast

Seasonal refreshments following the concert

Tickets £20

available from Choir Members and at the door

also online: please visit [www.saintgeorgessingers.co.uk](http://www.saintgeorgessingers.co.uk)

## THE ORGAN FUND

We would appreciate your support at two forthcoming fundraising events for the Organ Fund. First, on **Friday December 13th at 7:30pm** there is to be a **concert** in the church featuring our own choristers. This event will be followed by refreshments in the hall.

Then in February or early March, we will organise a **Parish Lunch**. Details of the lunch will be announced early in the new year.

Of course you can contribute to the Organ Fund at any time, by putting your donation into a yellow envelope and marking it "ORGAN FUND," then add your name and address before putting your envelope on a collection plate. Or you could complete a monthly Standing Order. You will find these forms at the back of the church. When completed, please give the form to Douglas McIlldoon, Selby Nesbitt or to one of the wardens.

We are trying to come up with a few other, smaller fund raising ideas to help to continue this work. Those who use FaceBook will have seen the '**Buy a Carol for Christmas**' opportunity online. This is a way for you to make a donation, to choose a piece of music for the choir to perform at the concert on December 13th, or to sing as a motet or anthem during Advent and Christmas. If you'd like to be part of this, either follow the link on the FaceBook page or copy the link below into your web browser.

<https://forms.gle/fVvNy4L7CdmM5Qtn8>

Should your favourite carol not be on the list, you're welcome to ask me to consider adding it.

Thank you all,  
David Falconer



## FROM THE ORGAN LOFT

### **BUY A CAROL FOR CHRISTMAS; PROCEEDS IN AID OF THE ORGAN FUND**

Fund raising can often be quite a chore, there are so many worthy causes and it's often difficult to make discerning choices. There is little doubt that the music heard weekly in St George's is of a continually high standard, that similar would not be found in many other parish churches in Ireland, and certainly not a choir as young as ours. To enable a choir such as ours, we have to focus on training, on repertoire and on continually improving our techniques as singers in order to create the choral blend that we achieve weekly. However, were it not for the support of the organists and the variety of timbres available from the organ, much of our repertoire would not be possible.

The organ is in disrepair, this is not news, but it is becoming increasingly unreliable in certain divisions and the tender for renovations is now ready to be sent to prospective organ builders.

As you will read in this magazine, the fund raised so far is really astonishing and very much a demonstration of the commitment of parishioners to the ongoing life of the church and its musical liturgy.

We are trying to come up with a few other, smaller fund raising ideas to help to continue this work. Those who use FaceBook will have seen the 'Buy a carol for Christmas' opportunity online. This is a way for you to make a donation, to choose a piece of music for the choir to perform at the concert on December 13th, or to sing as a motet or anthem during Advent and Christmas. If you'd like to be part of this, either follow the link on the FaceBook page or copy the link below into your web browser.

<https://forms.gle/fVVNy4L7CdmM5Qtn8>

Should your favourite carol not be on the list, you're welcome to ask me to consider adding it.

Thank you all,  
David

## **NIMMA**

### **Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association**

St George's took centre stage when the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association (NIMMA) launched its new book about the subject in the parish hall.

NIMMA chairman, Hugh Nelson, described the launch as a 'triumph' with the organisation of the event ranking among the best he has attended.

"Our thanks to the Rector Fr Brian Stewart," said Hugh, "To Judith Fawcett, Dot Lutton and Sharon Clarke, for hosting the splendid hospitality and to all the members of the St George's family who came to offer their support. They made our day a wonderful occasion."

Making Reconciliation a Reality is the fourth book in the NIMMA series and marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mixed marriage group's establishment at Corrymeela in 1974. This book is available at the back of the Church



Fr Tom Layden, far left, is pictured with NIMMA founding member Ken Dunn centre and its chairman Hugh Nelson right.

# SANTA CLAUS AND THE DALEKS

by Paul McLaughlin



It takes only the jingle of a sleigh bell to take me back to a particular Christmas and a very particular place. Robb's amazing department store in Belfast's city centre.

My brother and I, aged six and ten respectively, boarded Santa's magic sleigh in those last days of 1963. Magic? Yes. It didn't actually move. But it certainly felt like it did to us as images of colourful fairy tales with Cinderella, Snow White, the seven dwarves and several toothless witches flashed past on the moving walls. Even Bambi put in a fleeting appearance, his white spots brilliant against the green and brown backdrop as we were carried through a fast-moving fairyland.

Two weeks from my eleventh birthday, still in short trousers and knee socks, I was entranced.

The old joke back in the 1960s was that the job of in-store Santa was about the cushiest you could get. Only four or five weeks' work a year, pretty comfortable hours from Monday to Saturday and a nice warm grotto to greet the children. A customer of my Dad's, an elderly gent of large proportions, who didn't need to be padded up for the part, took the job for one year and after 'suffering', his word, the little children to come to him, told Dad that 'Santa was 'underpaid and overrated, but that it was all right apart from the kids'.

One of the highlights of our family Christmas each year was our trip to see Santa at 'Robb's', officially John Robb & Co, a department store that had extended many times in the late 19th century. Originally it was at No 15 in 1861, expanding to No 11 by 1870 and through to No 1 and, by 1890, it covered an entire block. John Robb, 'wholesale and retail silk mercers, woollen-drapers etc' had arrived.

In truth, the store sold just about everything you could imagine from curtains to clothing, perfume to gardens tools. An offline emporium that was as grand as its magnificent façade and its glorious interior.

Robb's had a big reputation. It was arguably the most glamorous store in the city for around 100 years. Its window displays and festive tableaux were the envy of the other big retailers and it was certainly a family favourite with my mother and father. It was also, for a sizeable majority of the Belfast populace, the first port-of-call for all things connected to the North Pole. The latest toys, presents and, of course, Santa himself.

The big man always had the whitest beard, the loudest red suit and the longest queue of youngsters waiting impatiently for the chance to be photographed on his knee clutching a little present. Until that

fateful Christmas when the Daleks came.

These metal monsters had appeared on our television screens the year before and captured the imagination of children and adults alike.

Following the early broadcast, the British press took the aliens to its heart, describing the show as 'splendid children's stuff, brilliantly directed, full of inventive touches and wonderful set-pieces'. We kids raved about it at school and my father used to imitate them with a rolled up newspaper at his forehead and a cry of 'Ex-ter-min-ate' when he came home from the early shift at work.

Just a year after the Daleks had appeared on our screens and around 10 million viewers tuned in each Saturday – the evil robots on wheels – standing only four-foot eight-inches, painted in silver with grey trimmings and operated by small actors cramped inside - had their sights set on seizing Christmas itself. Ironically, the eye-catching lights on their domes were actually Christmas tree lights covered by ping pong balls. Suddenly, it was all over the local news. The Daleks had landed in Belfast, had taken over a shop in Ann Street and had replaced Santa Claus. Doctor Who was nowhere to be seen.

We missed Robb's that year, my last visit to Santa until I returned much later as an adult, and we missed Father Christmas.

The Daleks were cold, sterile, despite their Christmas hats, and didn't have the necessary knees to welcome kiddies on board. Their voices, played through a tinny tannoy, were more frightening than festive. Their novelty visit – the word invasion was used widely on Tv and in the papers - had grabbed the headlines and captured the crowds, but our hearts were with the big man with the beard.

The following year, my brother Jimmy was back at Santa, Santa was back in favour and back at Robb's. The Daleks has been ex-ter-min-ated. Normal jingle services had been restored.

## **In Memoriam Robbie FitzGibbon (1996-2024)**



It is with great sadness that I announce the tragic death of my dear nephew, Robin (Robbie) FitzGibbon a very promising athlete and potential Gold Olympian. In 2019, he severely injured his ankle whilst training which required an operation and which drastically affected his running scores in order to qualify for the Olympics and Commonwealth games.

In 2022 he was diagnosed with a psychosis which caused him severe mental illness, he was receiving both therapy sessions and medication for this condition, however despite this, he died after falling from the Mill Hill road bridge above the A 27 near Shoreham by Sea, West Sussex on 7 October, aged 28. Robbie was an active member of Brighton Phoenix athletic club and was training for the Brighton Marathon in 2025, in order to raise funds for the mental health charity Mind for which he set up a just giving page. His father Robin, will now be running in the Marathon in 2025. If you would like to support Robbie's fund raising campaign for Mind, please visit his webpage.

More information about Robbie can also be found at the Brighton Phoenix Athletic club website.

<https://news.sky.com/story/robbie-fitzgibbon-former-british-international-athlete-dies-aged-28-13232363>

<https://brightonphoenix.org.uk/news/926/in-memory/>

<https://www.justgiving.com/page/robbie-fitzgibbon-1724066125946>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

As part of a memorial to my late nephew, Robbie FitzGibbon, who set up a fund raising campaign for the mental health charity Mind, I have made a special Christmas cake which I am going to raffle in order to raise additional funds for the charity Mind.

Tickets will be £1 each from 1 December.

Francis FitzGibbon

# MUSIC LIST December 2024

## Sunday 1st December

### 11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	18
Psalm	25: 1-9
Setting	Mass for Five voices - <i>Byrd</i>
Gradual hymn	15
Offertory hymn	5
Anthem	Hosanna to the Son of David - <i>Weelkes</i>
Hymn	3

## 1st Sunday of Advent

### Parish Choir

### 5:00PM Advent Carol Service

## Sunday 8th December

### 11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	408
Setting	Canterbury Mass - <i>Piccolo</i>
Psalm	Benedictus
Gradual Hymn	12
Offertory Hymn	10
Communion Hymn	298
Anthem	This is the record of John - <i>Gibbons</i>
Recessional Hymn	19 (Omit *)

## 2nd Sunday of Advent

### Parish Choir

### 5:00PM Choral Evensong

Responses	Plainchant
Psalm	125
Canticles	Arnold Faux-Bourbons
Anthem	People look East
Hymns	5, 170

### Choral Scholars

## Sunday 15th December

### 11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	362
Setting	Hassler
Psalm	146: 4-10
Gradual Hymn	5
Offertory Hymn	185
Communion Hymn	275
Motet	Ave Maris Stella - <i>Elgar</i>
Hymn	7

## 3rd Sunday of Advent

### Parish Choir

# MUSIC LIST December 2024

## Sunday 15th December

### 5:00PM Choral Evensong

Responses	Morley
Psalm	75
Canticles	Walmisley in D
Anthem	A Hymn to the Virgin - <i>Britten</i>
Hymn	5, 17

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent Chamber Choir

## Sunday 22nd December

### 11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	48
Setting	Mass for Five voices - <i>Byrd</i>
Psalm	80: 1-8
Gradual Hymn	6
Offertory Hymn	470
Communion Hymn	295
Anthem	Veni veni - <i>Lawson</i>
Hymn	33

## 4th Sunday of Advent Parish Choir

### 5:00pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

## Tuesday 24th December

### 11:00PM Midnight Eucharist

Setting	Missa Princeps Pacis - <i>Lloyd Webber</i>
Motet	O Magnum Mysterium - <i>Lauridsen</i>

## Christmas Eve Parish Choir

## Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> December

### 11:00AM Choral Eucharist

Processional Hymn	32
Setting	Darke in F
Psalm	97: 1-6
Gradual Hymn	40
Offertory Hymn	25
Communion Hymn	Carols
Anthem	In the bleak mid winter - <i>Darke</i>
Recessional Hymn	30

## Christmas Day Parish choir

## Sunday 29th December

### 11:00AM Eucharist

Hymn	24
Gradual Hymn	25
Offertory Hymn	644
Hymn	39

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas Choir Holiday

# CALENDAR December 2024

**Dec 1**

**ADVENT SUNDAY**

**9:30 am**

**Eucharist:** Fr Terence Dunlop

**11.00 am**

**Choral Eucharist:** Fr William Odling-Smee

Preacher: Fr Keith Suckling

Readings: Jeremiah 33: 14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13;  
Luke 21: 25-36

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Wardens*

Intercessor: *Janice Carruthers*

Servers: *Jonny Calder, Tony Merrick*

Tea and Coffee: *Brenda Claney, Judith Fawcett*

**5.00 pm**

**Advent Carol Service:** The Rector

**Dec 8**

**2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**9:30 am**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

**11.00 am**

**Choral Eucharist:** The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Malachi 3: 1-4; Philippians 1: 3-11; Luke 3: 1-6

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Anne McBride*

Intercessor: *The Rector*

Servers: *Omolewa Akinyele, Steven McQuitty, Tony Merrick*

Tea and Coffee: *Yvonne Doherty, Linda McConnell*

**5.00 pm**

**Choral Evensong:**

Lessons: Isaiah 40: 1-11; Luke 1: 1-25 (*Janet Sandikli*)

**Dec 11**

**Concert by St George's Singers - 7.30pm** (*See page 7*)

A Baroque Christmas Concert

**Dec 13**

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

**Dec 15**

**3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**9:30 am**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

**11.00 am**

**Choral Eucharist:** The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Zephaniah 3: 14-20; Philippians 4: 4-7; Luke 3: 7-18

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Brenda Claney*

Intercessor: *Archdeacon Harte*

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

Tea and Coffee: *Blaize Family, Judith Fawcett*

**5.00 pm**

**Choral Evensong:** The Rector

Lessons: Isaiah 35: 1-1; Luke 1: 57-66 (*Geoffrey May*)

**Dec 20**

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



# CALENDAR December 2024

**Dec 22**

**4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**9:30 am**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

**11.00 am**

**Choral Eucharist:** The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: Micah 5: 2-5a; Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1: 39-45

Sanctuary Flowers: No Flowers During Advent

Reader: *Paul McLaughlin*

Intercessor: *Anne McBride*

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

Tea and Coffee: *Keith Suckling, Steven McQuitty*

**5.00 pm**

**Nine Lessons & Carols:** The Rector

**Dec 24**

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

**11.00 pm**

**Midnight Festival Eucharist:** The Rector

Reader: Wardens

Intercessor: The Rector

Servers: *Jonny Calder, Tony Merrick, Jack McCormick*

**Dec 25**

**THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD**

**9:30 am**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

**11.00 am**

**Choral Festival Eucharist:** The Rector

Readings: Isaiah 52: 7-10; Hebrews 1: 1-4; John 1: 1-14

Sanctuary Flowers: Christmas Festival Flowers

Reader: *Wardens*

Intercessor: *The Rector*

Servers: *Mark Claney, Jonny Calder*

**Dec 26**

**ST STEPHEN'S DAY**

**1:00 pm**

**Eucharist** The Rector & Fr Graeme Pollock

**Dec 27**

The Walsingham Group meets at this Eucharist

**1:00 pm**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

**Dec 28**

**THE HOLY INNOCENTS**

**1:00 pm**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

**Dec 29**

**1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS**

**9:30 am**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

**11.00 am**

**Eucharist:** The Rector

Preacher: The Rector

Readings: 1 Samuel 2: 18-20, 26; Col. 3: 12-17; Luke 2: 41-52

Sanctuary Flowers: Christmas Festival Flowers

Reader: *Fr Tom Layden*

Intercessor: *George Woodman*

Servers: *Mark Claney, Agape Laoye, Tony Merrick,*

Tea and Coffee: *Betty Flynn, Dot Lutton*

**5.00 pm**

**Evening Prayer:** The Rector

Lessons: Isaiah 61: 1-11; Galatians 3: 27 - 4: 7 (*Paddy Sloan*)

## POETS CORNER

### Let us have Christmas

Take down the tree from the attic  
Dress it with baubles galore  
Tinsel and sprinkle with stardust  
And let us have Christmas once more

Snow on the roof says that Santa  
Is going to be early this year  
Turn back the clock, tear the calendar up  
And let's pray that he will appear

Weathermen blind us with science  
But blizzards have magical wings  
And an angel is christened in heaven  
Each time a Christmas bell rings

Position the crib in the window  
And settle the Bethlehem cast  
Of shepherds and kings and heavenly things  
And Mary and Joseph but last

Make way for the sweet Baby Jesus  
And cradle him close to your heart  
For Christmas begins with a whispering prayer  
That says celebrations can start

Yes, take down the tree from the attic  
Whether sunshine or snow have their sway  
For the Christ child is with us for ever  
So let us have Christmas each day.

*Paul McLaughlin*

## **Journey of the Magi - TS Eliot**

'A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.'  
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins,  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

*Submitted by Geoffrey May*

