

November 2023

# THE bulletin



“There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity  
under the heavens”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Photo by Cole Keister on Unsplash

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# Thinking about the Roman Empire?

Men – how often do you think about the Roman Empire? Have any of you been asked that question recently? I have. And if you've heard a larger than



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normal number of Roman Empire references lately it's probably not because a TV streaming service is shortly going to take down Ridley Scott's award winning film 'Gladiator' but rather because of a rather hilarious and bizarre TikTok trend where users ask the men in their lives how often they think about the Roman Empire. The hashtag 'roman empire' has been viewed well over a billion times on TikTok. How often do you think about the Roman Empire? The general consensus for men both young and old seems to be surprisingly - an awful lot.

My daughters asked me the question when we were out for my birthday dinner a few weeks ago, "Dad how often do you think about the Roman Empire?" I was one step ahead of them because while I don't follow Tik Tok I know they do and I had already become aware of this trend through other online sources. I said to them, "Everyday," and they collapsed into floods of laughter.

But the honest truth is that I do think about the Roman Empire regularly, probably not everyday but certainly several times a week

and this is why - because at Queen's University I studied the history of Rome from its founding in around 750BC to the collapse and fall of the Western Roman empire in the early 5th Century AD. I find many things happening in our culture and society today remind me of what happened particularly towards the end of the Roman Empire. In fact I see increasingly alarming similarities between the reasons historians give for the collapse of the Roman Empire and what I see happening in the West today. It leaves me in no doubt that you and I are living during the decline and fall of Western civilisation.

And that leads me directly onto my next question for all of you –

## How often do you think about the return of Jesus Christ?

Be honest  
- how often  
do you find  
yourself  
thinking about  
the return of  
Jesus Christ?  
Every day?  
A couple of  
times a week?  
Once a week



or once a month or less? Or if you are honest maybe you think about the return of Jesus Christ almost as much as you think about the Roman Empire – almost never! And if you do think about the return of Jesus Christ what kind of emotions does that cause you? Excitement? Confusion? Nervousness, fear even?

I find myself thinking more and more about the return of Christ

particularly as I survey the current state of our world and wonder how much longer can this go on? Extreme weather events and earthquakes, war and conflict in many parts of the world, particularly in Ukraine, and then in more recent days the horrific and deeply upsetting events in Israel and Gaza. Add to all this the ongoing assault on the theological and moral foundations of our society by those who say they are 'Progressives.' The world is in a mess and it could drive you to despair were it not for a belief in the return of Jesus Christ.

The truth is only the return of Jesus Christ will bring a solution to the world's problems because the return of Jesus Christ will bring to an end this present age and will usher in His eternal kingdom and the fulfilment of His promise to make all things new. If you join with us on Sunday evenings as we have been studying 2 Peter you will know that the return of Jesus Christ is one of the main themes of that letter.

The return of the Lord Jesus is Good News in a bad news world. It is Good News for creation – Paul says that, “the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.” (Romans 8:19) Creation is looking forward in hope to the day when it will “be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21)

It is Good News for those who presently live in war torn lands. They can look forward to the day, “He (the Messiah—Jesus) shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:4)

It is Good News for all of us who go through times of personal suffering and sorrow in this broken world for we are reminded by the apostle Paul, “I consider that our present sufferings are

not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”  
(Romans 8:18)

All these things will come about only when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. So once again let me ask how do you feel when you think about the return of Jesus Christ? If you get feelings of deep unease or fear, that could be because you do not yet know Jesus personally as your Saviour and Lord, or because you have become so conformed to the values of this present world which is destined to pass away.

But if you know Jesus as your Lord and Saviour and are living for Him, then a belief in His return should fill us with hope and expectation because it means, to paraphrase the words of Samwise Gamgee in ‘The Lord of the Rings’, that everything sad is going to become untrue.

In light of His coming, Peter tells us, “You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.” (2 Peter 11-12) No special event you are really looking forward to comes quickly when all you do is sit around waiting for it. Those special events seem to come more quickly when we keep ourselves active and busy preparing for them. So it is with Jesus’ return - as we wait for Him our calling and responsibility is live in expectation of this great day. We are called to be Jesus’ witnesses. As his witnesses we have the Good News to share in a bad news world and the return of Jesus Christ is a central part of that message. So let us as individuals and as a church pray for and take the opportunities that are presented to us to share that Good News.

Yours in His service,

Michael Davidson

# SERVICES FOR NOVEMBER

## 5th November

- 10:30am 2 John: Know the Truth & the Truth will set you Free  
Stephen Johnston
- 6.30pm Sunday Evening Praise in the Link

## 12th November (Remembrance Sunday)

- 10:30am Gospel Shaped Outreach 5: What is the Gospel Plan? - Michael Davidson
- 6.30pm 2 Peter 3:1-10 Scoffing at the Scoffers  
Michael Davidson

## 19th November

- 10:30am Gospel Shaped Outreach 6: How should we Pray?  
Michael Davidson
- 6.30pm TBC

## 26th November (Communion)

- 10:30am Gospel Shaped Outreach 7: What do we Say?  
Michael Davidson
- 6.30pm 2 Peter 3:11-16 Looking Forward to a New Home  
Michael Davidson



Watch online at  
[www.railwaystreet.org](http://www.railwaystreet.org)



Telephone Line Service  
028 9244 8979

## Bereavements

It is with sadness that we record the deaths of:

Sarah Jane (**Jean**) Whithorn, 8th September 2023

**Sadie** Lockington Doherty, 4th October 2023

**Irene** Foreman, 8th October 2023

**Shirley** Grace Caldwell, 12th October 2023

The congregation extends their heartfelt sympathy and prayers to their families at this time of loss.

## Births

It is with delight that we announce the births of:

**Layla Norma Jane McGrath**

12th September 2023



“Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.” Psalm 127:3

**Jesse Samuel Woods**

17th October 2023



# Prayer Focus Luke 11:1 “Lord, teach us to pray.”

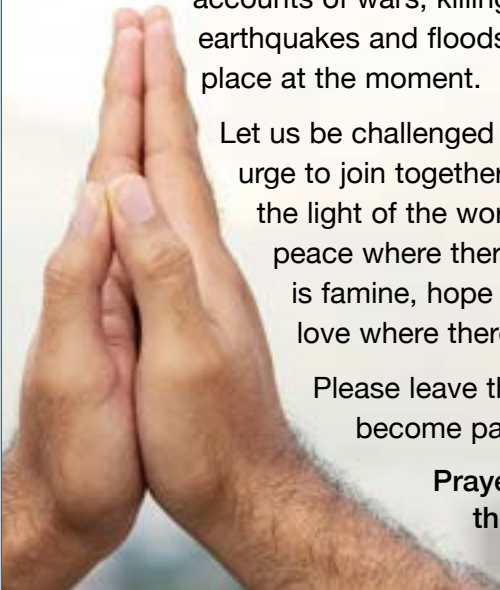
The dark evenings have arrived and it is tempting to draw the curtains and forget what it is like outside. But we cannot ignore the darkness which reigns in our world and is brought into our homes every day through radio and TV. There are numerous

accounts of wars, killings, widespread destruction, earthquakes and floods. Our world is in a very dark place at the moment.

Let us be challenged by these events and feel the urge to join together to pray. Pray that Jesus, the light of the world, may intercede and bring peace where there is war, food where there is famine, hope where there is despair and love where there is hatred.

Please leave the comfort of home and become part of our praying community.

**Prayer Focus will meet in  
the Link on Monday 20th  
November from 8-9.00pm**



## How to Respond to Israel/Gaza?



David Robertson, who blogs under [theweeflea.com](http://theweeflea.com), has written an article in Christian Today (CT) magazine in which he reflects on how a Christian should respond to the situation in Israel and Gaza - and why the Jews

are so hated . . . you can read the original [here](#)

# Bible Discovery

We now meet in the Minor Hall at

**10.45am (or 10.30am in The Link for coffee) on alternate Thursdays**

Dates for November are Thursday 2nd, 16th and 30th



Photo by Aaron Burden on Unsplash

## Helping Hands

Although no longer meeting as a group monthly, several ladies in the congregation still knit blankets and woolly hats/scarves. The first are distributed to local nursing homes and the second to Colin Jenkins as gifts for seafarers. All are much appreciated.

We also collect used stamps to send to RNIB. Please contribute to this if you wish, via the box on the vestibule table. Thank you.

## Sunday Evening Praise

**Sunday 5th November at 6.30pm in The Link**

Everyone welcome for a time of worship led by keyboard, cello and flute as we consider together how Jesus is indeed the 'Name above all names' throughout all generations.



Photo by Lorena Kelly on Unsplash

# Samaritan's Purse - Operation Christmas Child

Operation Christmas Child began in the UK in 1990, after Dave Cooke, a local businessman in Wrexham and his wife Jill felt called to do something in response to the plight of Romanian orphans at the end of the Cold War. Dave's sister Jan, came up with the concept of the shoebox gift as a form of easily transportable 'Christmas stocking' wrapped and packed with love. A tangible message of hope for children in the toughest of circumstances.



The Wales-based shoebox gift project became an official project of Samaritan's Purse in 1995. Every year since, Samaritan's Purse has collected shoebox gifts filled with toys, school supplies, and hygiene items for children around the world. Since 1990, more than 178 million children in more than 150 countries have received an Operation Christmas Child shoebox. The project delivers not only the joy of what, for many kids, is their first gift ever, but also gives them a tangible expression of God's love.

Thanks to all of you who have taken shoeboxes for this year's appeal. If you didn't get the chance to collect one there is still time to use your own shoe box. You can find all the instructions here: [SEM Landing \(samaritans-purse.org.uk\)](https://www.samaritans-purse.org.uk)

**Please note that the shoeboxes need to be returned by Sunday 12th November**



# 422

All welcome

Thursday 23rd November  
at 2.30pm in the Minor Hall

*Elizabeth Campbell & friends*  
*a musical afternoon of favourite hymns*

Well known tunes, and lively conversation  
Refreshments in the Link afterwards

Photo by Michael Maasen on Unsplash

## Car Park

The renewal notices for 2024 are being sent out with the envelopes as previously done. This will give instructions for payment and when the forms must be returned. If you do not wish to renew your access, can you please return any fobs to Ian Barron or to the office postbox in an envelope with your name and address on it so it may be deleted from the system.

As explained on the form, car park fees must be received by 31st January 2024 otherwise the fob will become invalid.





## Lisburn Foodbank *Christmas Hampers* Appeal 2023

Last year Lisburn Foodbank ended up assembling 450 Christmas hampers on site and over 2000kg of food went to our partner organisations to support them making their own hampers directly.

With so much uncertainty again this year they are unsure what the need will be but they want to be prepared either way and we know God always provides.

To assist the Foodbank in making up the estimated 500 hampers, they are asking that we have all our donations in by Sunday 26th November.

Railway Street is once again being asked to supply:

- Tinned fruit
- Sweet boxes
- Tinned ham (triangular tins).



Ladies, come and join us for

# *Christmas Dinner*

on Monday 27th November  
at 7.00pm  
in the Minor Hall

Price is £25 for two courses  
Nibbles and mulled wine on arrival  
Coffee and mints to finish

To book your place, forms are available from  
any member of PW committee

Catering is by Gilberry Fayre of Gilford

# Railway Street Christmas Market



hosted by  
Girls Brigade &  
Boys Brigade



**Saturday 2nd December**  
**10am-2pm**



We'll have market stalls,  
crafts, auction items and  
a special visit from Santa

Come along and enjoy  
breakfast, lunch, tray  
bakes, tea and coffee  
and loads of other treats

All welcome, bring a friend  
and no charge for entry



## CHRISTMAS GIFT SERVICE – SUNDAY 3rd DECEMBER 2023

For many years congregations from across the Province have generously supported the Belfast City Mission's annual Christmas Appeal for children and teenagers in needy families. As in more recent years we are asking for alternative gifts instead of toys. The response by our members to this Appeal has always been most generous and we trust that it will be the same for this year.

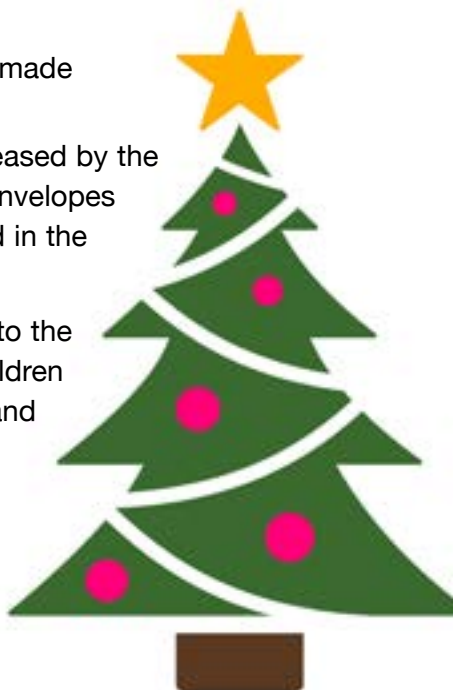
Our gift suggestions (unwrapped please) in order of preference are:

- Gift Cards (£5, £10, £15, £20) from Toy Stores eg. Smyth Pattersons, Argos, Smyths, etc.
- Selection Boxes
- Tins or Packets of Sweets
- Monetary donations (or by cheque/PO made payable to Belfast City Mission).

Note: Monetary contributions can be increased by the use of Gift Aid: In order to facilitate this, envelopes will be available on the vestibule table and in the Link from mid-November.

You are warmly invited to bring your gifts to the morning service on the above date for children to bring them forward during the service and place them at the Christmas tree.

The staff of the City Mission expresses sincere thanks and appreciation to you in anticipation for your help in supporting this year's Appeal for needy young people.



# The Link Gift Day – Sunday 19th November



It hardly seems like a year has passed since we celebrated the opening of our new Link and refurbished Minor Hall. Over that time we have seen the Link become a central hub where so many of our Church family have met to share fellowship and friendship, not

just on a Sunday, but right throughout the week. We have been able to use our new facilities to help the work of some of our mission partners and the wider PCI church family, so ensuring that our premises continue to be a blessing and encouragement to an increasing number of people.

We continue to fund the Link project through a combination of regular monthly giving and two Gift Days each year. This pattern is working well and we are very grateful to our Church family for your continued support. We are currently awaiting the completion of the Project snag list and will then receive the final retention invoice. Once this has been paid we will have a clear picture of exactly how much the project has cost and, we trust, be able to begin to make periodic additional lump sum repayments to reduce the capital balance outstanding on our loan account. This will help us to repay our debt to the Bank as soon as practically possible.

Although the current financial climate remains challenging, we are asking for your generous giving on our Gift Day to ensure that we can continue to meet our monthly repayments and reduce our

debt. Your support through regular giving and on our previous Gift Days has helped us make good progress towards this objective.

We are asking for your support on 19th November to help us continue on this journey. You can give by:

Returning your Gift Day envelope at the Sunday Services on 19th November

Delivering your Gift Day envelope to one of the usual addresses

By Bank transfer to the Link Project Account, the details are:  
Sorting Code – 950361 Account Number: 61042858  
Please use your FWO number as a reference.

We greatly appreciate all the financial support given to the Link project thus far and thank you for your continued generosity as we look to play our part in building God's Kingdom where He has called us to serve Him.

## End of Year Accounts

As we approach the end of this year, we would remind you that to be included in the 2023 Accounts and Annual Report, ALL contributions to the church funds must be forwarded no later than Sunday 8th January 2024.

If you never had or you would like Freewill Offering Envelopes for 2024 or if you would like to subscribe to the church funds by monthly Standing Order through your own bank, or maybe as a Tax Payer you have not yet signed up to the Gift Aid Scheme (the HMRC will refund to the church 25% of all your contributions at no expense to yourself thus enhancing our church bank balances), please contact:

Gordon Wallace (Treasurer) or Edith McConnell (FWO/Gift Aid Secretary).



Although we were created for relationship, sometimes we can find ourselves with very few meaningful connections in our lives. Our social networks can be fragile. We may have lost loved ones. Family members or friends may have moved away. Perhaps the lockdowns of recent years put an end to social activities we once enjoyed. And so, we can find ourselves isolated, longing for the company of others, and for relaxed and unhurried conversations.

The Link Up, each Wednesday morning from 10am – 12noon in the coffee dock area, provides a space where anyone is welcome to come and enjoy the company of others. Coffee, tea and biscuits are served, but it's not about the food (although, you might be lucky enough to land in on a modest birthday celebration!) It's simply about spending time together. that's why we call it the Link Up. It's a place to meet old friends and make new ones. It's a chance for those who may have drifted away from church to reconnect. It's an opportunity to show hospitality to visitors from outside of our own congregation, and to get to know them.

If you're free any Wednesday morning, you're welcome to come for as long or as short a time as suits you. Call in for a morning's craic or drop in for a cuppa on your way to town. Come by yourself or bring a friend or neighbour. We'd love to see you.

# Bible Reading Notes 2024

It is important to keep connected to God and a really good way of doing this is by using Scripture Union Quarterly Reading Notes. A variety of notes are available including:



**DAILY BREAD** - daily Bible Reading guide that aims to help you hear from God as you read the Bible. If you've ever asked the question, 'What possible relevance can this have for me today?' Or 'What difference does this make to my life?' Then read on...

**ENCOUNTER WITH GOD** - daily Bible Reading guide designed to look deeper at Bible passages to help you understand what God is saying to you and to his world today. Feature articles are also included.

## PRICE - £21 for all 4 issues

(cash/cheque made payable to Faith Mission Bookshops)  
- this is a special Church rate. If you wish to renew, cancel or start taking Bible Notes please let Ruth Nelson know.

To order, please place an envelope marked for the attention of RUTH NELSON on the offering plate at Church indicating your choice of Bible Notes along with your Name, Address, Tel No and money by Sunday 26th November 2023.

# What's happening?

## SUNDAYS AT RAILWAY STREET

MORNING SERVICE 10.30am (live streamed)

BEGINNERS - No. 31

KIDS - Upper Room

JUNIOR YOUTH - Minor Hall

EVENING SERVICE 6.30pm

SENIOR YOUTH - Upper Room

## BOYS' BRIGADE (Sept to April)

Monday - Company Section 7.30pm-9pm

Tuesday - Anchor Boy Section 6.30pm-7.30pm &  
Junior Section 7pm-8.15pm

## GIRLS' BRIGADE (Sept to April)

Thursdays: Tiny Tots & Explorers - 6pm-7pm

Juniors, Seniors & Brigaders - 7.30pm-9pm

## PRAYER FOCUS

3rd Monday of each month 8pm-9pm in the Link

## BIBLE DISCOVERY (Sept - April)

1st & 3rd Thursday each month at 10.45am - Minor Hall

## DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS (Sept - June)

Tues & Wed bi-monthly 8pm-9.30pm in various homes

## PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN (Sept - June)

4th Monday of each month at 8pm - Minor Hall

## 422 (Sept - June)

4th Thursday of each month at 2.30pm - Minor Hall

## THE LINK UP

Every Wednesday 10am - 12noon in the Link