

December 2025 - February 2026

THE bulletin

DOWN
↓
TO
EARTH

“The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighbourhood.”

John 1:14

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**‘The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighbourhood.’**

(John 1:14 The Message)

Dear Friends,

I don't know about you but Christmas always seems to sneak up on me. Every September I look at the calendar and I think to myself there is still a long way to go. I don't need to worry about the Christmas programme yet. But September to December is the busiest and most intense period of Church life in RSPC with many specials and annual one-offs such as Harvest, BB & GB Enrolment and suddenly before you know it is the end of November and Christmas is right around the corner with all its demands and busyness.

It is hard for me to believe this will be my 11th Christmas in RSPC. It's a great time of year and it brings with it some of the highlights of our church calendar - such as the BB & GB Christmas Market, the Christmas Gift Service, our Carols By Candlelight Service, our Alternative Carol Service and culminating in our Christmas Morning Service. It's little wonder many ministers don't wish each other, "Happy Christmas!" but, "Happy Boxing Day." For it finally brings the opportunity hopefully to sit down and put your feet up - preferably in front of a warm fire!

Unlike last year we will be following an Advent Series in the lead up to 25th December. It will be based on resources developed by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity and it is called, 'Down to Earth.'

When Jesus was born as a human in an ordinary guest room in the small town of Bethlehem, he upended what the world thought it knew about God. Not distant and untouchable, he became truly down-to-earth - God with us, God living like us, God doing all the everyday things that humans do.

His example is one of humility and involvement. Of putting your boots on and getting out there. Of getting your hands dirty, working to make earth a little more like heaven. His mission touches every part of life – every place, task, and relationship – and he calls us to play our part in it.

Hopefully as we follow this series we will all get a fresh perspective on the familiar Christmas story, and be

inspired to follow the down-to-earth Saviour in our everyday lives.

On the four Sundays of Advent we'll explore four different themes through Bible reflections. We'll consider the amazing humility Jesus shows in his incarnation; the huge scope of his redemptive work on earth; the invitation he gives all kinds of people to be part of that work; and what it looks like for the church to go out into his world, joining in his down-to-earth mission.

I do hope you will join us and also invite others. As we have seen in our teaching series in the Gospel according to John, one of John's themes is that of witness. This season gives us the opportunity to

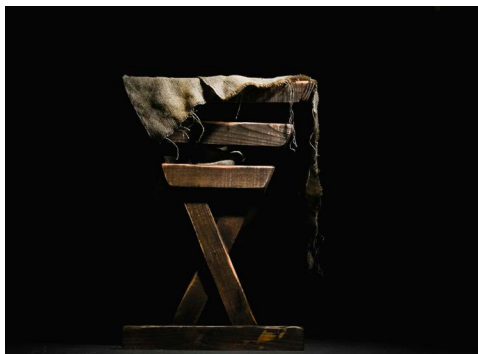


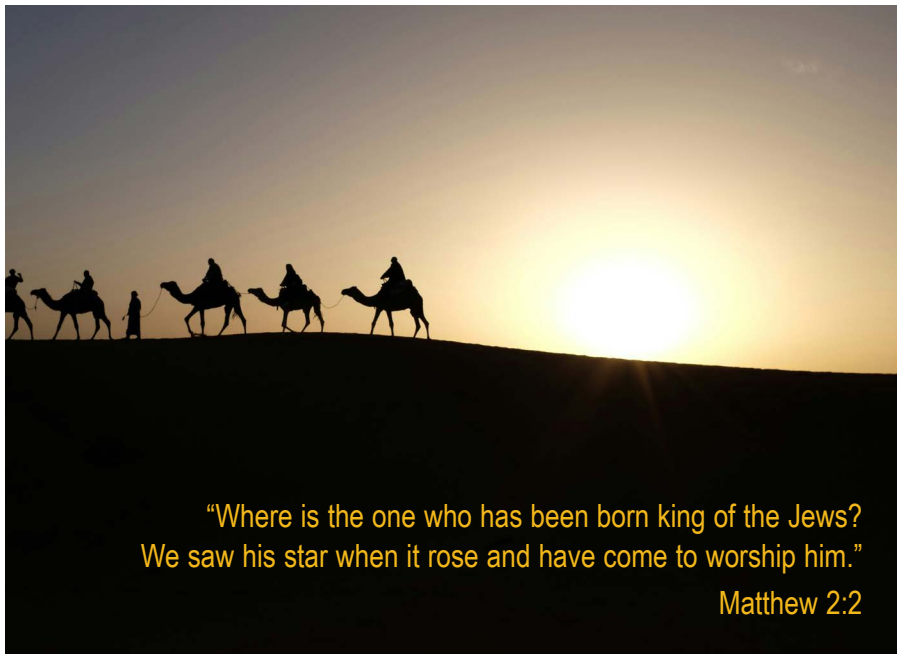
Photo by Greyson Joralemon

bear witness to the Light. It is the time of year when many are more open and ready to come along to church so let's think about who we each can invite to come along with us as we think about the One who came 'Down to Earth.'

Could I take this opportunity to wish you all a hope-filled Christmas and the prayer that we will all know God with us in 2026.

Yours in His service,

Michael Davidson



"Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?
We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

Matthew 2:2

Marriages

9th September 2025: Ben McCleary & Hannah McCartney



17th October 2025: David Arneill & Rachel Bethel



Births

It is with delight that we announce the birth of **Chloe Woods**, daughter of Adam and Rebecca Woods, on 26th October 2025.



Bereavements

It is with sadness that we record the deaths of:

Mabel Margaret Montgomery died 27th August 2025

Thomas James (**Jim**) Thompson died 19th October 2025

Robert **Jeremy** Belshaw died 19th October 2025

Dr **Stephen** Doherty died 17th November 2025

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

SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER

'Down to Earth'

7th December

- 10:30am Christmas Gift Service - 'Down to Earth 2: 'The Unusual Rescue' Matthew 1:18-25
- 6:30pm Will the Real God Please Stand Up? 1 Kings 18:16-40
Michael Davidson

14th December

- 10:30am 'Down to Earth 3: The Unlikely Invitation' Luke 2:8-16
Michael Davidson
- 6.30pm Alternative Carol Service - led by Alan Wall
Speaker: Charlie Hadjiev

21st December

- 10:30am 'Down to Earth 4: The Unchanging Christmas'
Luke 2:15-21 Michael Davidson
- 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight

25th December

- 10:30am Christmas Day Family Service: 'Down To Earth'
Michael Davidson

28th December

- 10:30am Luke 11:1-13 'Teach Us To Pray' Stephen Johnston



Watch online at
www.railwaystreet.org



Telephone Line Service
028 9244 8979

SUNDAYS IN JANUARY

4th January

10:30am John 4:43-54 'The Second Sign' Michael Davidson

11th January

10:30am John 5:1-15 'The Healing At The Pool' Peter Todd

18th January

10:30am John 5:16-30 'Life Through the Son' Michael Davidson

25th January

10:30am John 5:31-47 'Witnesses to Jesus'
COMMUNION Rev Brian Gibson

SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY

1st February

10:30am Mission Focus: Open Doors

8th February

10:30am All Age Family Service John 6:1-15 'Fish and Loaves Lunch'

15th February

10:30am John 6:16-24 'Walking On Water' Michael Davidson

22nd February

10:30am John 6:25-59 'I Am the Bread of Life' Michael Davidson



Watch online at
www.railwaystreet.org



Telephone Line Service
028 9244 8979

Belfast City Mission Christmas Gift Service - Sunday 7th December

Once again this Christmas we are seeking donations as follows:

- Gift Cards (£5, £10, £15, £20) from Toy Stores eg. Smyths, Argos etc.
- Monetary contributions (or by cheque, made payable to Belfast City Mission)
- Selection boxes
- Tins or packets of sweets.



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

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT Sunday 21st December 6.30pm

Singing rehearsals continue each
Sunday after the Morning Service
in the Upper Room from
12 noon - 12.45pm



Railway Street Presbyterian Church
Alternative Carol Service



Christ

PROMISED
DELIVERED
SACRIFICED
VICTORIOUS

14th December 2025

6:30pm

The service is open to all. Music is lead by band, organ, and strings and Charlie Hadjiev will be delivering a short message. There will be readings covering Christ Promised, Delivered, Sacrificed and Victorious throughout the Bible, showing us how Christ is visible throughout history, and how the impact of Christmas is relevant to our everyday.

POP UP CHRISTMAS MARKET

SATURDAY 6TH DECEMBER 2025

at

RAILWAY STREET
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

10AM TO 2PM

STALLS * FOOD
KIDS ACTIVITIES * TREATS
SANTA * AUCTION



Our BB & GB Christmas Market is back again on Saturday 6th December from 10am - 2pm.

Please make an effort to call down to enjoy some breakfast and lunch as well as some tray bakes and other treats plus tea and coffee. There will be kids' activities in the Minor Hall.

We'll also have some fantastic Market Stalls where you can pick up some Christmas Gifts and bargains. Some confirmed stalls are Eko clothing, Cinnamon Tree Craffhouse, Wood laser products, candles and many more. Santa will arrive at 12 noon!

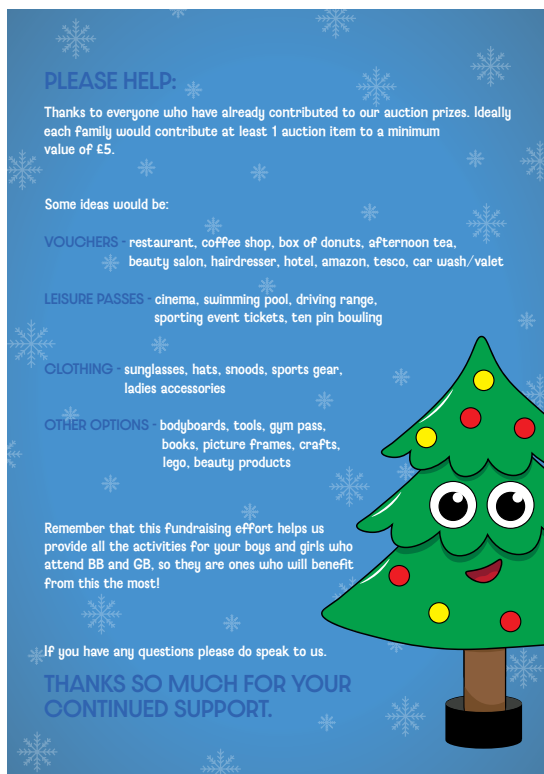
PLEASE HELP with our silent auction and bidding auction.

We'd love for each family to supply an item for our auction which is a great way for us to raise funds for our BB and GB Companies.

Some ideas are listed on the flyer - if everyone can contribute this will be a great success!

There is a box outside the main hall for any donations and it would be great to receive these by Tuesday 2nd December at latest.

We look forward to welcoming you and your friends and family!





Dates for your diary

Girls' Brigade

GB Christmas Party Night – Thursday 11th December

GB Christmas Holidays – 18th December - 1st January inclusive

GB resumes – Thursday 8th January 2026

Boys' Brigade

BB will meet on Monday 15th & Tuesday 16th December

BB Christmas Holidays – 23rd December - 7th January inclusive

BB resumes – Monday 12th January for Company Section &
Tuesday 13th January for Anchor Boys & Juniors

Save the Date - 422

18 December: "Christmas Decorations"

Nelson Small

22 January: "A Lamp Unto My Feet"

Mark Wells from the Bible Society Northern Ireland

26 February: "Walking Expeditions"

Kathy Johnston

422 is open to everyone and meets at 2.30pm on the fourth Thursday in the month in the Minor Hall, followed by refreshments in the Link.

Bible Reading Notes 2026

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 and **ENCOUNTER WITH GOD**

£22.50 for all 4 issues (this is a special Church rate)
(cash/cheque made payable to Faith Mission Bookshops)

To order, please contact RUTH NELSON indicating your choice of Bible Notes along with your Name, Address, Tel No and money by Sunday 7th December 2025.

PW meetings 2026

Presbyterian
Women
Living for Jesus

Monday January 26th at 8pm

Missing Persons - Phillip Robinson

‘Whether missing or lost, God is our refuge’
Please bring Mission Boxes

Monday February 23rd at 8pm

Mercy Ships - Michael McBrien

‘Bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor’

Sunday March 1st PW Service

Speaker Rev. Leslie Addis ‘God ever present’

Prayer Focus

Luke 11:1 “Lord, teach us to pray.”

The dark days of winter have arrived. Death and destruction are rampant in our world. However, a light has come and we get another opportunity this Christmas to hear the Good News story and respond.

This is the world we find ourselves in and where we meet to pray.

Once again we invite you to join us for our monthly time of corporate prayer. Your presence would be a great encouragement.

We take time to draw near to God and to seek his will. We confess our shortcomings and ask for guidance, wisdom, forgiveness, understanding and grace before focusing on specific prayer requests.

We meet from 8-9 pm in the Upper Room on Monday 15 December, 19 January and 16 February.

Bible Discovery

Bible Discovery will conclude for 2025 on Thursday 4 December. Please note we will meet in No 31. Coffee from 10.30am. Bible Study 10.45am.

Studies will resume for 2026 on Thursdays 15 January, 5 and 19 February.

This is a group open to everyone, regardless of age or Christian commitment. If you are interested to discover more about the Bible, you will be most welcome.



Safeguarding

The 12th November was a day very few of us will forget quickly. At a press conference in Assembly Buildings that afternoon the Moderator of our Presbyterian Church, the Right Rev Dr Trevor Gribben, announced that he would resign and retire from active ministry on 30th November 2025. This was as direct result of the identification of serious failings in safeguarding in Assembly Buildings between 2009 and 2022.

The adverse impact of this upon the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has been significant so far and is likely to remain so for some time to come. The Convenor of the General Council, Rev Dr David Bruce provided a statement for the press following the Moderator's announcement and the Acting Clerk, Rev Dr David Allen, provided a statement that was read to all our congregations at services of worship on 16th November. Copies of these statements and associated reports are available in full on the PCI website. As an investigation is currently being undertaken by the PSNI we are advised that no additional information in relation to these matters can be provided at this time.

These unprecedented events have left many within our church and the wider community badly shaken. There is deep sorrow, great confusion and a



significant amount of anger at what has happened. We want answers, we want to know why this has happened and what needs to be done to care for and help those hurt, we want to ensure that what has gone so badly wrong is put right and steps taken to make sure this never can happen again. Most of all, many within our denomination, and in our own church family, are deeply upset that the name of our Lord Jesus has been dishonoured and the work of His Kingdom damaged by what has happened. We cry out to God for forgiveness, lament what has taken place, repent of the sin that surrounds this and seek God's restoring grace.

It is worth stressing that this issue relates to Assembly Buildings and not to local congregations. Rev Dr Allen made clear in his statement that safeguarding in congregations has been, and continues to be, undertaken to a high standard.

I want to assure you that safeguarding of our children, young people and vulnerable adults is taken extremely seriously in Railway Street. Our Safeguarding Policy is available on our website, and in addition, we have a dedicated Safeguarding section on our website with key information for any who need it. Our Designated Person is Dr Sam Mitchell and our Deputy Designated Person is Mrs Pamela McElhinney – both are available should anyone have a concern. To ensure that safeguarding is considered appropriately it is an agenda item for consideration at every stated meeting of Kirk Session. We apply our policy and procedures robustly within a strong governance framework seeking to discharge our responsibilities to the very highest standard.

If you would like to ask any questions or seek clarification on any matter relating to safeguarding please speak to either our Minister, Rev Michael Davidson, or to our Session Clerk, Stephen Johnston.

Stephen Johnston

Session Clerk

Church Finances

As we approach the end of this year, we would remind you that to be included in the 2025 Accounts and Annual Report, ALL contributions to the church funds must be forwarded no later than **Sunday 4th January 2026**.

If you never had, or you would like,
Freewill Offering Envelopes for 2026

or if you would like to give 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
20% of all your contributions **at no expense to you**.)

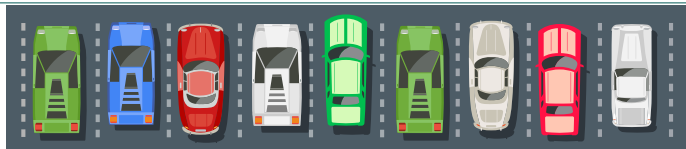
please contact Gordon Wallace (Treasurer)
or Mr Stephen Johnston (Clerk of Session)

Car Park

Those with

Church Car Park fobs will have received their car park renewal notice for 2026. This gives 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 the Church caretaker's post box, or the collection plate 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 2026** otherwise the fob will become invalid.



Finance Update November 2025



As we come towards the end of the year, I would like to thank our church family for your continued generous giving to both our own needs and to the needs of others. Your generosity in these financially challenging times is greatly appreciated.

In early 2023 we availed of a loan of £625,000 from our Bank. This loan is to be repaid over 10 years with monthly payments of around £6000. This loan operates on the same way as a capital and interest mortgage with each monthly repayment being made up of an element of capital and of interest. We receive approximately £3000 in monthly giving to the Link Account with the balance required to meet our monthly payments coming from the twice yearly Gift Days in May and November. Our debt to the Bank will be around £550,000 at the end of this year. Given that we have paid all the invoices relating to the Link Project we anticipate that we will be able to use funds received for property that are not required for monthly payments to make reductions in the capital amount we owe during 2026 and in future years.

Alongside this, our congregation continues to raise funds for others with £2,848 donated for the World Development Appeal in this year's Harvest offering and £385 donated for the Earl Haig Funds on Remembrance Sunday. This is alongside giving to both the Shoe Box and Foodbank appeals. We are grateful to all who have supported these funds and commend the Christmas collections for the Belfast City Mission and Lisburn Foodbank for your generous consideration.

In line with previous Financial Updates, ongoing inflationary pressures continue to impact our main operating account, our No 1 account.

Very simply, we need to have our giving to Free Will Offering (FWO) increase in line with inflation to ensure that our income covers our expenditure. Whilst a significant amount for FWO comes in during December, the year-on-year position is only marginally improved (when compared to 2024) as we head into the final month of the year. As such, we have had to draw on a small overdraft facility of £10,000 to help us manage our cashflow.

We are asking that where you can, it would be of considerable help to the management of our No 1 account, for those giving to FWO to do so by monthly standing order. We realise that this does not work for everyone but would be grateful for those who can to move to this way of giving to our Church.

Overall, the use of 'Electronic' giving continues to increase and we thank all those who have set up new and increased regular contributions to the church bank accounts. Bank details are set below and if you can use this method, it would be of real help to us.

Free Will Offering and United Appeal is via the main Account.

Please ref FWO or UA with your number and/or name

Account Name: Railway Street Presbyterian Church

Sorting Code: 950361

Account Number: 91026178

Property / Link contributions are:

Account Name: Railway Street Presbyterian Church No 6 Account

Sorting Code: 950361

Account Number: 61042858

Reference: Please use your FWO number (and/or your name)

Many Thanks

Gordon Wallace, Treasurer

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 (1st Sunday of the month)

SENIOR YOUTH - Upper Room, 6.30pm-8pm

BOYS' BRIGADE (Sept to April)

Monday - Company Section 7.30pm-9pm

Tuesday - Anchor Boy Section 6.30pm-7.30pm &

Junior Section 7.15pm-8.30pm

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 - No.31

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