



THE UNITED PARISH
Christ Church & St John's

PRAYER WARRIORS

Christmas 2024



Thank you for picking up this Prayer Warrior's booklet for December. We are all appreciative of your prayers.

Oh blimey!!! Here we are again. This is where time just seems to speed up and certainly in our house, we all appear to go at breakneck pace towards Christmas day. I do the same thing every year and promise myself that I won't get sucked in to the whole chaotic preparation thing and will use as Advent as I should, as a preparation for Christmas.

I now have a small collection of devotional books for Advent. I picked one this morning which I am firmly resolved to use. I thought this prayer at the very beginning of the book might be useful. (As always, I have tweaked it slightly)

"Father in heaven, seal deep within our souls the meaning of this coming. Jesus came not to entertain. He came not merely to make the greatest story. He came to restore us rebels to God. Advent is personal. Draw us closer in these days ahead to the heart of Christ, which is your own heart, and make this advent more real and meaningful in the lives we live. In Jesus name we pray Amen

Please continue to pray wherever and whenever you can.

Praying for a joyous Christmas and a blessed New Year for all of you.

Yours in Christ

Leigh Henderson

Thank you to Eve McCabe who painted this image for the front of our booklet.

Prayer Points from Revd Jonny

It was Andy Williams who sang, “It’s the most wonderful time of the year”, and yet for many pastors and ministers, it can feel like the most exhausting time of the year. Pray that God sustains all of those in leadership within the 2 churches as we offer to bring the hope, peace, love and joyful message of Christmas to many, without feeling so exhausted by it.

This is the time of the year when I bring my Select Vestry into the Rectory after our last meeting of the year and thank them for their service to the Church. Pray for God’s blessing on all those who serve in many different ways, that they would know God’s heart for them, and also my appreciation for what they give to the witness of God’s Church in Ballyclare and Ballynure.

There are many opportunities in this Christmas season to shine the light of Christ into the lives of friends, family and neighbours. Pray that many in our parish would through the direction of the Holy Spirit, engage with people and invite them along to one of the many celebrations in the coming weeks.

As I look into 2025, this will be a year where our focus turns to Evangelism. We reach out in many ways within our community already but pray that there will be a power of the Holy Spirit transforming lives across our towns as we share the joy of Jesus with many.

Pray for our pastoral visiting team as they spend time with all those people in our parish who are housebound. Pray that conversations and pastoral care will provide comfort to those who continue to be an important part of our church family.

Personally, I am coming into a busy period in my own Postgraduate studies. Pray that I can discipline my time to this work over the coming months.

Pray for the many people in our community who will find it difficult to make ends meet this Christmas. We thank God for the resources he has given to us as churches, so pray that God will continue to guide us in how to use those resources to bless others around us.

This past week several of us had a very fruitful meeting with CMSi and our brothers & sisters in Nairobi, Kenya. Pray that the Holy Spirit would direct our discussions about 2025.

Finally, pray that over this holiday season, all our parishioners and families would have opportunity to rest, and be grateful for what the Lord has done.

Parish Groups

Mothers Union - Vera Jones

We give thanks for the faith, fellowship and fun we enjoy through our membership of Mothers' Union.

We give thanks for the recent success of our recent Big Sing in Ballymena, the collection at this event went to our 'All-Ireland Mums in May Fund'. From this source many different local projects are given start up grants. In Connor Diocese we received help to purchase equipment for women and children leaving Women's Aid refuges to move into new accommodation.

Pray for our newly elected Diocesan President, All Ireland President, and Worldwide President who will take up Office at the end of December.

Pray for members currently in hospital.

Pray for all those for whom the winter months are difficult especially the elderly, the lonely and the anxious. Mothers' Union is a Worldwide Organisation, and we pray for members throughout the world as they work within their communities.

The members of Mothers' Union send best wishes to all Parishioners for a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Prayer Ministry Team - Andree Bradley

As we approach our time of celebration of the birth of our Saviour. Please give thanks to God for all answered prayer this past year.

Please pray that our congregations will know someone from the PMT is available to pray with them throughout the Christmas season.

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

'Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done.'

Genesis Art Fellowship - Lynne Brannigan

Psalms 139:13-16 – 'For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.'

Please give thanks to God for: -a chance to continue to explore our understanding of God's creative heart, a deepening of fellowship opportunities and to serve and to witness

Please pray that God will help us to hear him, to walk forward in what we believe he is saying to us, to have grateful hearts and to give Him the glory.

CMS Ireland - Bert Rea

Kenya

Although the floods have subsided our prayers are still needed for the ongoing relief work helping to re-house the 500 or so members of the community whose homes were demolished after the devastating floods. Give thanks for the generous support of support parishes like Ballyclare/Ballynure and other donors.

Please pray for the security situation to improve in the housing area 30 metres each side of the river in Nairobi, which was designated for demolition by the government. When Jenny Smyth of CMS Ireland visited Tujisaide in September, she was advised not to go to that area because it was unsafe due to looters.

Please continue to pray for the Tujisaide school students whose numbers are now rising as there is more room to accommodate them, and for John Omondi (Principal), the teachers & school lunch cooks.

Please pray for Isabelle and Lucy as they prepare reports on the building project and apply for more funds to further equip the new classrooms in 2025, also our link partners Lucy, Louise, Isabelle, Antony and Kathleen as they serve the mission and call of the Tujisaide Self-Help Group.

Please continue to pray for all the activities that go on in the TAF Centre of Excellence – especially the more than just a meal (MTJAM) programme which provides a free hot meal for an average of 510 children every Saturday lunchtime. Please pray for Naomi the TAF Librarian who is on a 2-year Certificate course in Librarianship and Information Studies at the Railway Training Institute, and for Lucy Wangui who is running the library in her absence. Please pray especially for the IT (Information Technology) innovation hub room being planned for the 2nd floor, giving thanks for the technical support given by Jonny and others from the United parish + furniture that has been donated by the Kenya Irish Society.

Please pray for peace in the aftermath of the mass **Gen-Z protests** that took place in July/August.

Please give thanks and pray for Isabelle's brother Ferdinand, who was ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church of Scotland in September, as he takes on this important role in God's ministry.

Overseas Mission

Release International – Lisa Willett

AFGHANISTAN: Praise God for the radio ministry happening there, enabling the Gospel to be heard even by those in rural areas.

Pray for security for the ministry team making the radio programmes and for wisdom as they respond to enquirers.

Pray for more Afghan language speaking Christians to join the ministry team.

Pray that many more Afghans will hear the Gospel through the radio programs and come to faith in Christ.

NIGERIA: Pray for the Christians who have suffered at the hands of Fulani raiders and other terrorists and for an end to the violence.

Thank God for the many Islamist militants who are coming to faith in Christ.

Ministries within our town

WAVE – Leigh Henderson

Please give thanks for the success of our coffee morning which was very well attended and raised a staggering £1200.

Please continue to pray for our members that they will know God in their lives and that will carry the knowledge in their hearts that they are special to God.

Please pray that our next Christmas meeting will be a blessing to everyone who attends. 'The wonder of the birth of Our Lord never fades.'

Boys Brigade- Ian Heaney

Give thanks and praise to God that BB is going very strong! We have good numbers and continue with consistent attendance in all sections! Our numbers are now around **60 children and teenagers**, and we are well into our yearly programme, continue to pray for the transformation in the boys' spiritual lives.

There will be parties, nights out and dinners happening during December, as you can imagine it's a long list of items to purchase and much organisation. Please pray for all those who are organising, shopping and making it all happen. Please pray that everyone will be blessed by all the upcoming events but never forgetting about the real meaning of Christmas.

Friday Night Bible Study Group – Tim Burns

We continue to run SERVE programme with our young people which focusses on developing young leaders and encouraging their discipleship.

Pray for the young people as they come along that they would find a supportive and encouraging place and that they would be encouraged in their faith. We are also using our older teens and those at university to help lead this, so pray especially for them.

Please pray also for our home that it would feel like a safe and encouraging place for people.

Compassion Ministries- Frances Wilson

General -Pray that Jesus will be at the heart and centre of all that we do.

Pray for the many families in our community who will struggle financially and emotionally over the Christmas period, and for those in our community who need help but are afraid to ask.

Please give thanks for our dedicated teams of volunteers, those in our community and parish who donate to our ministries and for the connections we have made in the community.

Baby Basics

Please give thanks for the extremely generous donation we received from the Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan Mothers' Union.

Give thanks for our invitation to the Council's Winter Woollies event in November. We connected with potential new referrers and came home with 3 black bags of knitted blankets and cardigans.

Please pray for guidance as we seek to engage with more charities who would benefit from our support.

Pray for all of the families we support - refugees, teenage mums, victims of domestic abuse, those who are struggling financially and those who are suffering with poor mental health. Give thanks that what we do makes such a difference to these families, not just materially but helping them to know that they are valued.

Please give thanks for the health professionals and charities who work with the families we help to support.

Munch on Mondays

Pray for our continuing relationship with Ballynure Co-Op who provide the food for our table.

Pray for those in our community who depend on Munch on Mondays and the Foodbank.

Future Programmes

We will be running the Kintsugi Hope programme in conjunction with REACH next year. Give thanks for the funding we have received from Church of Ireland Mind Matters to run this programme. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us in our planning.

Pray as we plan for the Christians Against Poverty Life Skills programme next year. Pray for God's guidance as to when we should hold it and who we should reach out to.