# St Columbanus Ballyholme







Nepal Trek
Jumpin and Youth Updates
Cricket Match
Staying Safe and First Aid





The Parishioner

..On the way together..

September/October 2025

#### The Rambling Rector

Before appearing at Glastonbury this summer, Sam Ryder reflected with a journalist on his now legendary 2022 performance at the Eurovision. "I tried to keep myself in a space of gratitude, saying "Thank you God, for giving me this chance." As our new autumn season begins, that's a sentiment and maybe even a prayer I hope we can all make our own. Thank you God, for giving me this home, this family, this church, this faith and all the things that fill my life with blessing! Not just because it's wonderful to see everyone back at Church after the long holiday, and not just because Harvest will soon be upon us, but perhaps as a parish we can resolve, Sam Ryder-style, to keep ourselves in a space of gratitude?



We've got our families, our children, our young people, our seniors, our local community, our mission partners and our vision for the future. Surely, we of all people know that sense of plenty which moved St Paul to write to the Colossians: "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Col 3:17)

SED

#### **Parish Visiting Team**

Do you enjoy chatting to people and listening to what they have to say? Have you got a bit of spare time on your hands? If so, you might like to consider joining our Parish Visiting Team. We have about a dozen volunteers, both men and women, who each visit one or two of the housebound members of our Church family every so often.

Visiting is a practical way of showing God's love to those who can no longer attend Church. A lot of the more senior members of our Church family can feel lonely or isolated and greatly appreciate having a friendly face calling in with them from time to time.

I have been part of the Visiting Team for several years now and find it a fulfilling and rewarding experience.

The Parish Visiting Team meets every so often to offer one another support and share our experiences of how things are going. Our next meeting is on **Tuesday 23 September at 10:30am in the Parish** 

### Tuesday 23 September at 10:30am in the Parish Centre.

If you would like to find out more, please come along to the meeting without any obligation to commit to anything. We have a Visiting Team Help Sheet which explains what is involved, things to bear in mind and some practical suggestions. Copies of this will be available at the meeting.

As the number of people to be visited increases, extra volunteers are always required and will made very welcome.

Also, if you know of someone you feel would benefit from having someone to visit them please ring Heather McKee in the Parish Office Tel:02891-274912.

**Christine Johnstone** 

#### It's Smartie time again

This year a Smartie tube will be delivered to you at home towards the end of August.

Please return the tube filled with 20p's at the Harvest service on Sunday 12th October.

Happy sharing of the Smarties! Ian Hardstaff for the Mission Committee



## Back to Church Sunday Invitations

Please find enclosed with this issue an invitation for you, your family and your friends to join us for **Back to Church Sunday on Sunday 14 September**. As ever, this coincides with the start of our new children's and youth programme.

After you've read it, by all means pass it on with a prayer to someone you think might just be waiting for some gentle encouragement, either to come back to worship after a long time away or to join our fellowship for the first time.

Thanks to everyone who came along back in June to tame the hedges and tear up the weeds around the church grounds. Unfortunately, owing to this year's warm spring and wet early summer, our hedges and weeds were quick to fight back! Listen out for announcements please as we give the old place its second short-back-and-sides of the year, probably in the run up to Harvest. 20 people turned out last time, and so the work was done in a couple of hours. However long or short a morning you can give us, please come along and bring gloves, buckets, trowels/shovels and brushes.





#### Café Church - 10.00am, first Sundays, in the Halls

This year at Café Church we're exploring the Old Testament, kicking off with the creation story on Sunday 7th September. Café Church is a relaxed service in the Parish Centre with singing, a light sermon, games and a craft or drawing activity for little ones. It is not a children's service, but an 'everyone' service. We begin with tea/coffee and a bun, a catch up with everyone else at your table and then we start with our first song. If you haven't given Café Church a go, please do give it a try. You won't be disappointed. We have an amazing team of helpers who help with the set up, tidy up, music and providing the coffee and treats, who make Café Church a special event each month. We look forward to seeing you at Café Church this year.

Have a look at some photos of what we get up to below. Please also note that it is the adults taking part in the paper plane race!







#### The Wednesday Club

We are meeting up for a new season on Wednesday 3rd September at 2.00pm, and look forward to welcoming all our ladies, and we would also welcome anyone new who would like to come along and give it a try. See you then.

Jumpin' this year, as ever, has been fantastically planned and executed by Paula! Our theme of 'Wild Wild West' has been really fun, with some great Bible stories tying into it (Joseph and his foray into Egypt, the Israelites entering the Promised Land), and lots of denim. Andrew also gave himself a moustache because, in his words, "cowboys have moustaches" ...





This year has seen the formation a brand-new Jumpin' group – the Pumas! This is the age group who are too old to be kids but not old enough to be leaders, and so we've been teaching them God's big story and the part they get to play in it. That's been really great because it's an age group we haven't been able to cater for in the past, but because we have such a big and experienced team this year, we've been able to make it happen.















Greetings to everyone involved in MU. I hope all of you are finding some rest and relaxation over the break in routine for the Summer months (and maybe some fine weather as a bonus). I thought I would share some dates for our Autumn season of MU.

#### New dates for your diary

Our first meeting is Monday 1st September at 7.45pm (a new time for this year.) Then on Monday 6th October we meet again at 7.45pm to listen to a visiting speaker. We will collect our annual subs of £30 at either the September or October meetings please. These are forwarded to headquarters in Mary Sumner House.

We are very excited this year of 2025 as we are celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the formation of our MU branch in Ballyholme. (Some of you may remember our 60th or even 50th.

We will be marking this with:-

Afternoon Tea for all our members and invited guests in Parish Centre at 4.00pm on Sunday 2nd November.

This will be followed by a Church Service around 6.00pm.

We will chat all about this at our first meeting on 1st September.

We will discuss guest list, including former office bearers, Rectors' wives and Ballyholme friends over the years!

So please come along and enjoy the planning.

Our December Festive Theme evening will be on TUESDAY 2nd December at 7.45pm in the Parish Centre.

For January 2026 fun we can look forward to our Annual Dinner at Bangor Golf Club; date to be confirmed nearer the time.

#### Many Blessings for now from Yvonne & MU Team





When the MU team met in the Church Centre on Monday 4th August to organise the programme for the coming year, the refreshments included a birthday cake for Sylvia who had celebrated her 70th birthday the previous week.

#### **Monday Morning Coffee**

Monday morning coffee and scones will resume in the Church Centre on 8th September 2025 at 10.00am. Why not come along and find out what is your favourite flavour of scone. At present mine is the pear and walnut scones! Listen for the announcement in Church.

Nothing in theological college quite prepares you for your first week of ordained ministry, and mine came with an unusual spin: the annual parish cricket match. Surprisingly, it wasn't the preaching or even the solemnity of celebrating Eucharist for the first time that unsettled me as I entered the priesthood—it was the daunting prospect of being thoroughly humiliated before the faithful with a willow bat in hand. The physical and emotional demands of the Gentleman's game seemed to far exceed those of lifting a chalice or paten correctly. Would I make a complete fool of myself? Would word spread like wildfire on the parish WhatsApp groups that the rector had appointed a dud as his curate?

Upon my arrival at the cricket ground, parishioners were already engaged in dynamic stretches, activating muscles that I was pretty certain had been dormant in me since the late 90s. Expensive-looking gloves, helmets, bats, and cricket shoes were scattered about. Observing someone discreetly sliding a box down their tracksuit trousers, I found myself humming the familiar line: "Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom."



My training incumbent looked every inch the professional in full whites and an MCC jumper, informing me that I'd be going in sixth, and I clung to the hope that divine providence (or a stubborn top order) would spare me. But no—the openers, full of Christian grace and charity, gallantly retired mid innings to give others a chance, and before long, I was up. I made my way to the wicket, instinctively taking my guard on middle stump—an echo of a childhood memory—and braced myself.

Somehow, and much to my surprise, I hit the first ball and ran. I barely remember the shot itself—only the crack of the ball on the bat, prompting my partner to shout, "Yes." My legs, hindered by the pads, felt clumsy and unbalanced, yet they carried me forward – a single. The second ball I faced didn't give me that chance. It came fast—too fast—and I picked it up just a moment too late. I turned my head, tried to move, and while I did my best to 'turn the other cheek,' it was that very cheek that received the blow. Somewhere in the distance, someone gasped - a sharp intake of breath. Behind me, just low enough to maintain plausible deniability—"And that's why you wear a helmet." Welcome to Ballyholme! Miraculously, I survived. Seven whole balls! I hadn't gone down as a duck, as my wife had predicted.

Then came the bowling—the part I truly dreaded. Foolishly, I tried to put a bit of Shane Warne spin on the first ball, only to watch it swatted beyond the boundary for four. Forget that, I thought—I'll gun the ball down as fast as I can. Strangely enough, it worked. After a couple of dot balls, one definite wide, gracious suggestions of a yorker, and one thoroughly bewildered batter, I started to sense that I might, after all, emerge from the evening with some vestige of my pride intact.

Our team emerged victorious, and as we left the field, the Rector gave me a hearty pat on the back and said, "Well, you're officially in now." I nodded, because in the strangest of ways, amid the wickets and my swollen cheekbone, between the boundaries, dropped catches, light-hearted sledging and encouragements, I had been initiated not just into the local church community, but had also tasted something of the chaotic and incarnational joy of parish ministry.

Did not the night's uncertainty and anxiety, the awkward fumbling, and that feeling of being thrust into something both exhilarating and overwhelming—metaphorically capture the essence of parish ministry? No matter how much we prepare, aren't we always taken aback when our vulnerabilities are exposed or when unexpected moments of grace break through in surprising ways? Maybe ministry, like cricket, is less about perfection and more about persistence. Staying in the game, rising after each setback, and trying to find a rhythm amidst uncertainty. Perhaps the role of a curate is simply about faithfully stepping up, bat in hand, and trusting that—despite the imperfections—ministry unfolds with the support of others and God's help.

"Great. Same time next year," I replied to the Rector, half-joking, half-serious.

**Rev Jonny Watson** 

#### Communion Lunch - Dates for your diary

What lovely weather we have enjoyed over the summer, plenty of sunshine over the last few months. I hope it continues into September, when we will all come together for our next Communion Lunch. The lunch is an opportunity for senior members of our congregation, to come together to celebrate Holy Communion, followed by a light lunch. It is always a joy to see those who can't come to Church as often as they would like, celebrating Communion together and meeting other parishioners.

Invitations will be sent out in early September, requesting notification of any dietary requirements and if transport is required.

The next two Communion Lunches will be held in the Parish Centre on:

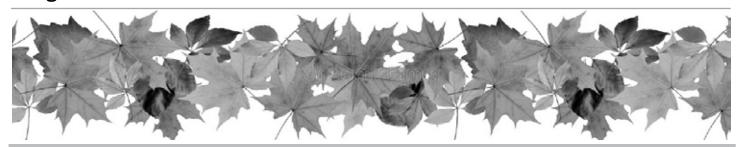
#### Thursday 25th September at 12.30pm Thursday 11th December at 12.30pm

Please note these dates in your diary.

If you are a senior member of our congregation and would like to join us, please contact the Parish Office, we would love to see you.

We are looking for volunteers to add to our team, who would like to help prepare the food for the lunch, if anyone is interested in helping, please contact myself or the Parish office.

#### **Margaret**



It was with heavy hearts that the Missions Committee met in late June at the Rectory. Simon had brought us together following Sandra's sad passing. We reflected on her many years of outstanding leadership and her personal passion and commitment to Mission both in the Bangor area particularly with refugees and further afield. We gave thanks for her guidance and the special way in which she had encouraged us all.

Shortly after joining St. Columbanus it was Sandra who encouraged me to join the Committee. I saw at first hand a true disciple of Christ in Sandra following his great Commission. We are determined to keep our work going and indeed progressing not least as a fitting remembrance of Sandra.

The Committee elected me, or ambushed me depending on your view point, as Chair. Pat Davidson was unanimously endorsed as Treasurer. We were all particularly pleased that Dave Martin decided to remain as minutes Secretary. Jonny Watson our new Curate will now provide the pastoral clergy input.

Our first big event is Harvest and with this magazine comes the Smartie tube campaign this year sorted for us by Trevor Smyth. Thanks to Trevor for his sterling work. We want to encourage that everyone who gets a Smartie tube fills it as generously as possible. Every contribution is vital to the funding of the partners we support.

There will be further news on the work going forward by the Committee in the Autumn but in the meantime make sure you remember Harvest and Smartie tubes. A bigger than ever amount collected this year would be a real spring board for us moving forward.

Many Thanks

#### Ian Hardstaff



# Operation Christmas Child: Pack a Shoebox, Change a Life

This autumn, join us in supporting Operation Christmas Child, a global project that delivers gift-filled shoeboxes to children in need. Each shoebox is a powerful tool for sharing God's love, offering joy, hope, and the message of Jesus Christ. For many children, it's their first-ever gift. Let's make an eternal impact together. We encourage you to make a difference and pack a shoebox. Shoeboxes can be returned to Church no later than Sunday 9th November 2025.

Shoebox surprises in Romania

"A ministry partner in the Cluj area decided they would share gifts with a group of young people with Down's Syndrome and with the families of women in Gherla prison. When they first arrived, they found that the children were nervous of visitors and scared that they may be taken away from their home. But instead, they were wonderfully surprised and full of joy to receive the unexpected gifts. It was moving to see the intensity with which a little girl hugged her new doll; to see children sharing items with friends."

Let's be a part of something bigger this season!

#### **Darryl Nesbitt**

SAMARITAN'S PURSE

If you have any queries please speak to Geoff Hewitt, Parish contact, on **07899666257.** 



#### News around the Parish



#### **ALPHA - Watch this space**

Alpha will be running again in January on Wednesday evenings. Please save the date. We'd love to see you there to explore our faith in more detail.

There'll be further details in the November/December magazine.

If you have any questions about Alpha please speak to Don Todd, Billy Davidson, Nuala Duffy or Michelle Savage.

#### Safeguarding Trust/Child Protection

The start of our new Youth and Children's programme is a timely moment to restate the priority we give in Ballyholme Parish to Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Every Church of Ireland Parish is required constitutionally to submit an annual online Safeguarding Return. This usually happens after the Easter Vestry and our Staff and Parish Panel members met to do this formally before the end of last season. This was also our opportunity to complete our new SLA (Service Level Agreement). For data protection reasons, AccessNI now require that each parish and diocese sign a 'Service Level Agreement' between them and the Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland. All new AccessNI checks will now be done in the new system.

We are always keen to improve how things are run and glad to hear from parents and the wider church family should you have any feedback/input to give – especially if you want to get actively involved in one or other of our programmes. Volunteer training

remains key and is accessed online as well as in person. Our Safeguarding policy is available on the parish website and posters display our Parish Panel Members should anyone need to get in touch with them or have any concerns to raise.

If you aren't able to get hold of Paula Lown our Children's Worker or Andrew in the first instance, please never hesitate to contact Simon Doogan (077604 07139), Libby Beech (07896 204244) or Stanley Officer (91461650).



# FIRST AID TRAINING COURSE

# First Aid Training Monday 8th and Monday 15th September 7pm to 9:30 pm in the Parish Centre

It's three years since our last Parish First Aid Course. If you are leading a Parish organisation, club or other activity please treat this note as your invitation to the training planned for 8 and 15 September in the Parish Centre. The course will also include how to use our defibrillators.

Come along and brush up your skills, as none of us know when we will be in a situation where we could help someone following an accident or injury or even save a life. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Please contact the Parish Office to book your place

Elsewhere in this edition of the Parishioner you will spot an ad for our First Aid/Response course. The course aims to provide the leaders of our various organisations and clubs with the skills needed to cope with any sudden illnesses or accidents to members during activities.

The course has been organised by the Parish Health and Safety Committee which meets regularly to inspect the premises and does all it can to identify possible hazards and reduce risks which may arise.

As the new season gets underway a further initiative by the Committee is the issue of a reminder to leaders describing the hazards already identified in our Parish Risk Assessment and the steps necessary to avoid mishaps.

Hazards identified on our premises include car park congestion if large numbers are expected, cold weather dangers, corridor clutter, trailing power leads, and many others. All of these and the steps needed to avoid mishap, are detailed in our Health and Safety Policy which you can view on the Parish Web Site.

Please take a few minutes to have a look at the Policy. Each of us has a part to play in maintaining our enviable Health and Safety record. And if you spot anything needing attention, please let the Office or the Glebe Wardens know of your concerns.

#### Discover the Big Picture of the Bible

Mark, our Diocesan Lay Reader, also works for Bible Society Northern Ireland—a charity passionate about making the Bible accessible and understandable for everyone.

One of the exciting resources available from the Bible Society is The Bible Course. This is an engaging, interactive 8-week journey that helps participants grasp the full story of the Bible—from Genesis to Revelation.

Whether you're new to Christianity or are a long-time believer looking to deepen your understanding, this course is for you.

Led by Dr Andrew Ollerton through video content, group discussion, and personal reflection, The Bible Course offers an experience similar to The Alpha Course.

It's designed to tackle common questions like:

- \* How did the Bible come together?
- \* Can we trust it?
- \* Why is there violence in the Bible?
- \* How does it all fit into one big story?

If you've ever wrestled with these questions or simply want to grow in your faith, don't miss this opportunity.

The course will run weekly from Wednesday 24th September to 19th November at 7:30pm, and everyone is welcome.



Come and see the big picture of the Bible and how God speaks to us through it today.

Recently our parish was given the opportunity to support the Bishops' Appeal to raise much needed funds for Gaza and the Middle East. Donations from Down & Dromore Diocese amounted to over £10K and the contribution from our parish was £553.88. Many thanks to all who contributed to this worthy cause.

Please see the following update below taken from the Down & Dromore website:

"A special collection for the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal for World Aid and Development by parishes in Down and Dromore to support people caught up in the violence in Gaza and the wider Middle East, has raised over £10,000.

Bishop David encouraged every parish to give people the opportunity in June to support a special collection – which will be channelled by the Bishops' Appeal to two trusted partners working on the ground in the Middle East, Tearfund and the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem (who both work across the region).

The money raised will support emergency aid to those most in need, through healthcare, food and shelter, and whatever support can be provided to those in such great need. The Diocese of Jerusalem runs one of the main hospitals in Gaza (Al-Ahli Arab Hospital) which cares for people from all communities. Tearfund is working in Gaza, the West Bank and around the Middle East to provide support and vital supplies to people impacted by the conflict, including displaced communities."

#### **Harvest Flowers**

Have you ever wondered what happens to all the lovely flowers that people kindly donate to decorate our church for Harvest?

On the Monday following Harvest Sunday, a small team of people make up the flowers into bunches and deliver them to some of the housebound members of our church family so that they can enjoy some of the Harvest decorations at home.

If you would like to help make up bunches of flowers and/or to make some deliveries, please come along to Church on Monday 13th October at 10.00am. It would be great to see you there.

Many thanks

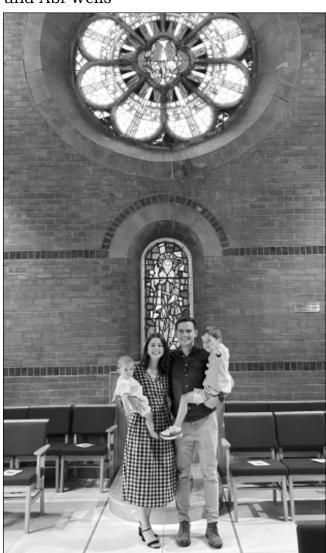
#### Irene Long



#### **BAPTISM**

#### June

**22nd:** Micah Joseph Wells, son of Mark and Abi Wells



## "Meeting God in the Mountains: A Journey Through Nepal's Three Passes"

'For as long as I can remember I've been intrigued by culture and lands beyond the bounds of BT20. Over dinner with an old school friend the conversation turned to future holiday plans and I was asked would I be keen to join him on a 'walking trip' he was considering.

Apart from having read about exotic sounding place names and tales of explorers seeking to climb

Apart from having read about exotic sounding place names and tales of explorers seeking to climb to the highest points in the world, little did I know that 18 months later I would be boarding a plane bound for Katmandu!

#### The journey

My training started in earnest last summer. Regular trips to the Mournes, hiking weekends to the Lake District and the Macgillycuddy's Reeks in Kerry culminated in a training weekend in the Wicklow Mountains in February 2025 to meet my fellow travellers.

The trek was organised by Earth's Edge a Dublin-based adventure travel company that ensures all their expeditions are accompanied by an experienced doctor. There were 12 of us in total with folk from Cork, Limerick and Dublin. The one thing we all had in common was a love of the mountains and this was to stand us in good stead.

#### **Key Facts**

The 'Three Passes Trek' takes in some of the most remote, rugged and awe-inspiring terrain in Nepal.

With no high mountain experience I did not initially dwell on the potential difficulties of spending extended periods of time at altitude. Over 21 days it traverses three high passes: Renjo La (5,360m), Cho La (5,420m), and Kongma La (5,535m) and is a longer and more demanding alternative to the classic Everest Base Camp trek. Offering stunning views of the Himalayas, including the towering 8,000m+ peaks of Everest, Makalu, Lhotse and Cho Oyu, the trek winds through peaceful Sherpa villages, serene Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and across dramatic glaciers, culminating in visits to iconic destinations like Everest Base Camp (5,364m) and the turquoise Gokyo Lakes. Optional, but absolutely worthwhile, we were also to be given the chance to summit three (non-technical) peaks; Gokyo Ri (5,360m), Kala Patthar (5,550m), and Chukkung Ri (5,550m).





#### **Getting There**

At the end of April my wife Jayne left me to the brand new Grand Central Station in Belfast and I boarded the coach to Dublin Airport. With a brief stopover in Doha we landed in Katmandu to be greeted by Arjun a Nepali who was to be our constant guide, sage and counsellor for the next 23 days. With less than 24 hours in Nepal's vibrant capital I made the most of the opportunity to immerse myself in its tropical heat, vivid sights, chaotic sounds, and rich, unfamiliar aromas. Kathmandu was a whirlwind, frenetic, colourful, and alive. A cultural and historical hub, it somehow thrived amid the apparent chaos, where

both locals and tourists navigated the flowing traffic with a mix of instinct and nerve. Early the following morning we were on the road to Ramechhap. A 5-hour endurance event! With potholes and craters the size of a bus. The main road had been badly damaged by floods and landslides at the end of last year so no sleep was to be had.

#### The World's Most Dangerous Airport

To get to the head of the trail in the Everest Region involves a short 20-minute flight from Ramechhap to Lukla. Somewhat apprehensively we took off on our 16-seater Tara Air flight and were soon distracted by the stunning views of the rice terraces, valleys and ridges. Equal parts

breathtaking and nerve-wracking the terrain grew steeper and the airstrip at Tenzing-Hillary Airport came into view, perched on a sloped ledge, carved into the mountainside. With its short runway, abrupt drop off and unpredictable winds, it's often called the most dangerous airport in the world, but as the wheels touched down on what felt like a vertical landing strip, there was a shared sense of exhilaration, equal parts relief and amazement.

#### **Acclimatisation**

Lukla is the gateway for trekkers hoping to visit the Everest Region. We were introduced to the rest of our team of assistant guides and porters, all local Nepalis and, following a mug of 'ginger, lemon, honey' tea we set off on the 2-day trek to Namche Bazaar and Sagarmatha National Park. The trek from Lukla to Namche Bazaar unfolds gradually, winding through terraced fields, pine forests, and traditional Sherpa villages nestled along the Dudh Kosi River. Suspension bridges strung high above rushing glacial waters add a thrill of exposure, prayer flags fluttering in the wind are like blessings for safe passage. The trail rises and falls in rhythm with the terrain, each step offering glimpses of snow-capped peaks teasing the horizon. The final ascent into Namche, a steep climb, was both physically demanding and rewarding, culminating in arrival at the vibrant trading hub of



the 'Khumbu region, where yaks share narrow alleys with trekkers and the first full views of the high mountains leave you breathless in more ways than one. Namche is 3,500m above sea level and is the staging point for expeditions to Everest and the Khumbu region. A small colourful market town in a horseshoe shape built on the side of a mountain. We spent two days acclimatising to the altitude, climbing higher in the morning and returning in the afternoon.

#### The Trek

From Namche we headed west along an incredibly scenic but more remote course in a clockwise direction, following the

'traditional trading route with Tibet along the Bhote Khosi river. We visited the small villages of Thame and Lungden, making time to take in the traditional Nepalese way of life as we continued

to acclimatise. I was struck by the beauty and peacefulness of the trails. Before breaking the tree line, at this time of year the paths are lined with juniper bushes and rhododendron forest in full bloom. The majestic mountain scenery grew more breathtaking with each passing day.

#### Accommodation

Our accommodation throughout was in traditional teahouses. Simple but welcoming, teahouses line the trekking routes offering basic accommodation, warm hospitality and hearty meals. The staple dish, dal bhat, a nourishing mix of lentil soup, rice, and curried vegetables is comforting, endlessly refillable and somehow always exactly what you need after a long day on the trail. Each night we enjoyed the inviting heat of the stove as we removed our boots after a long day's trekking, its welcome heat all the more appreciated given it was fuelled by nothing more than dried yak dung.

#### **Mountain Passes**

By day 9 on the trail we tackled our first high pass of the trip. The climb to Renjo La at 5,300m (17,400ft) was both gruelling and exhilarating. It began with a steep switchbacking trail that rose relentlessly through a barren rocky landscape. Each breath became a conscious effort in the thinning air as the trail becomes etched into scree and loose stones, occasionally interrupted by patches of snow and ice. As we



neared the top, prayer flags flapped wildly in the alpine wind, their bright colours against the stark, grey rocks. The final steps to the pass were some of the most demanding I have ever taken. From the crest of Renjo La, we were greeted by a jaw-dropping panorama: the emerald chain of the Gokyo Lakes nestled far below. The lakes shimmer in glacial hues of turquoise and deep green, their surreal colour made even more vivid by the starkness of the surrounding terrain. Beyond them, the Ngozumpa Glacier, the longest in the Himalayas, snakes its massive, jagged tongue through the valley. Towering over it all are the snow-draped peaks of Cho Oyu, Gyachung Kang, and the Khumbu giants. There's a hush to the place, a sacred stillness broken only by the wind blowing through the prayer flags. Stretching as far as the eye can see the view is truly breathtaking. With the climb came the descent as we navigated our way to Goyko village arguably one of the most picturesque in the region. We spent two days at Goyko benefitting from further acclimatisation to minimise the effects of altitude sickness. We had the opportunity to hike to the summit of Gokyo Ri,



which rises about 600 metres above the village to an elevation of 5,360 metres. The round trip took around 4 to 5 hours. In addition to the stunning views over the Gokyo Lakes that I've already described, we were rewarded with our first clear sighting of Lhotse and Mount Everest. Our guide pointed out the iconic South Col and the Hillary Step, both clearly visible in the distance.

#### Life on the trail

The days were structured with repeated elements that began with a wakeup call and cup of black tea before a breakfast of porridge and eggs. Our main duffel bag was left out for the porters and our day sacks packed with essentials such as wet gear, hat, gloves, fluids, snacks, sunscreen and

micro-spikes. The days we tackled the peaks and high passes were pre-dawn starts so a head torch came in handy. As the sun rose and you gained early impressions of the surrounding landscape and glimpses of the valleys and at times cloud cover far below us. Walking was steady, our guides reminding us that 'slowly, slowly wins the day' and we had breaks when needed. The secret to high altitude walking is get into a rhythm, one step at a time. You can feel your heart pounding in your ears and the only sound is your boots crunching against gravel and frost. Occasionally we encountered wildlife such as the Himalayan mountain goat, yaks and birds such as the bearded griffon, the snowcock and the colourful national bird the Monal. Arjun would point out landmarks and the names of the surrounding peaks and there was ample opportunity to learn about Nepal, the people and their customs. The weather was kind to us with little or no wind, however the higher we went the colder it became with temperatures down to -10°C on some occasions. We all looked

forward to arriving at our next stopover each afternoon where a welcome cup of tea would be awaiting us along with time to reflect on the day's walk. Dinner each evening was communal. An opportunity to get to know fellow walkers to share stories, laughter and a sense of camaraderie after putting in the miles we had all travelled to get here.

#### **Onwards to Everest Base Camp**

After days of relative solitude crossing the Ngozumpa glacier, navigating our second high pass (Cho La) and tracing quiet trails where we encountered only the occasional trekker, the shift was unmistakable as we crossed into the Khumbu valley and hit the main Everest Base Camp trail. Suddenly the path was more alive with movement: trains of yaks jangling with bells, porters shouldering impossible loads, and trekkers from all corners of the globe, each drawn by the same magnetic pull of Everest. The tea houses were fuller, conversations more varied, and the trail itself pulsed with energy. After an overnight in Loboche, we spent the next day pushing on to Base Camp. It felt like entering a small alpine city. Over 50 expeditions clustered beneath the Khumbu Icefall, their tents



like bright confetti against the grey moraine with satellite dishes, flapping flags, and modern amenities to cater for the needs of the teams waiting for a weather window.

While the climbers at Base Camp prepared for their ascent of Everest, we had the chance to undertake our own summit, Kala Patthar. Though modest in height by Himalayan standards, the climb felt deeply personal with the clearest, most breathtaking view of Everest itself. In a sense there was a feeling on having reached our summit individually. It wasn't the world's highest peak, but in that moment, for those that made it, it was their Everest, earned, unforgettable, and just as meaningful.



#### Final Push

The final leg of our journey took us over Kongma La, the highest of the three passes at 5,535m, to reach Chukkung, before starting the 4-day descent back to Lukla. Initially we had to cross the Khumbu Glacier which felt like stepping onto another planet, a shifting maze of ice, rock, and meltwater where the path was never quite certain and the scale dwarfed us. Beyond the glacier, the climb to Kongma La, our final pass, was steep and seemed to stretch endlessly upward. I recall it was a beautiful day and I experienced an overwhelming sense of privilege to be walking through such a raw and untouched environment, an environment where you could truly feel how small we are in the vastness of God's creation, the One who made heaven and earth. Makalu, Lhotse, Nuptse, Island Peak and the graceful shape of Ama Dablam visible during the descent were unforgettable.

#### Reflections

Looking back, my trip to the Himalayas was far more than a physical journey through the mountains, it turned out to be a spiritual pilgrimage. I felt a renewed

awareness of God's presence, His creativity, and His sovereignty over all creation. The trek stripped away distractions and left space for reflection, worship and a profound sense of dependence on His strength each day. I am deeply grateful to the family, friends and colleagues who encouraged me, prayed for me and blessed me with the space to take on this journey. Their support was a constant reminder that none of us walks alone. I returned from the mountains with tired legs but a full heart, humbled, recentered, and deeply thankful for the gift of both the journey and the One who created the path. As I began my journey, my sister-in-law Lynne sent me this verse:

'I lift my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth' (Psalm 121:1-2)

It became a quiet guiding light for my spirit and continues to stay with me every step of the way.



#### Steven Nickell



# TOO years of the Nicene Creed

extracts from an article The Church Times by former Bishop of London, Lord Richard Chartres

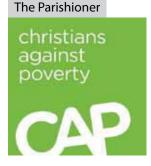
May and June saw celebration pilgrimages to the sites of the first four General Councils of the Christian Church, all of which lie in modern-day Turkey. Nicaea (Iznik) is some three hours from Istanbul. The modern city stands on the shore of Lake Iznik, beneath whose waters lie submerged the remains of the church in which scholars believe the Council of 325 was held very close to the imperial palace of the Emperor Constantine.

The problem being addressed in 325 had arisen from the teaching of the Alexandrian priest Arius. Anxious to defend the faith in one God, Arius taught that Christ, although a divine being, was not on the same level as the Father and Creator of all. In the words of a popular Arian hymn about Christ, "there was when he was not". For centuries however, as the Roman governor Pliny reported to the Emperor Trajan, Christians were singing hymns to Christ as to God. There was a tradition of prayer and devotion at stake. In the event, the Council concluded that Christ was of the same substance (homoousios) as the Father. Jesus Christ, who lived among us and gave his life on the cross, is not just "like God", but is very God of very God.

The Emperor Constantine looked to the Council, which he convened, to consolidate the unity of the Empire. For the 318 bishops who attended, it must have seemed a miracle. Some of them bore the scars of the torture that they had experienced in the last great official persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire; now they were welcomed into the palace for a banquet under the protection of the imperial guard. The fruit of the work of the Council, largely confirmed by the subsequent gathering in Constantinople, still stands as a fundamental statement of the faith of the Undivided Church, which, in the form of the Nicene Creed, is proclaimed in Anglican churches week by week at Communion.

The situation faced by Christians today in the ancient womb of our faith is challenging. Mending the net of common belief that holds us together should be everybody's urgent concern. The re-birth of the "one holy catholic and apostolic Church" must come first from revisiting the sources. This is not some species of antiquarianism, but essential if we are to read the signs of promise and peril in our own times, and draw out of our common traditions something fresh, so that the world can see Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and – amid so many threats to human flourishing – the life.





Local Debt Service

# A lifeline for those drowning in Debt...



Ashleen Johnston,

My name is Ashleen Johnston, and I am a member of Christ Church Primacy. I'm a wife, a mum of 3 girls and a granny, and once I was in Debt. For the past 4 years, I have been the **Christians Against Poverty Debt Centre** Manager covering Bangor, Holywood and Donaghadee. Our centre was set up in June 2010.

Think of CAP as the RNLI for those who have hit the financial rocks. Like the RNLI we are a charity providing a free, non-judgmental, confidential, face-to-face service. We offer guidance and practical support to help people find a way out of unmanageable debt.

Established by John Kirkby in 1996, CAP have been operating throughout the U.K. for nearly 30 years. After devising a system to get himself out of debt, John believed God was calling him



John Kirby, Founder

to help others in the same situation.

Personally, when I was struggling with debt, I learned about the help CAP offered through my local church. Speaking to someone at church enabled me to reach out for help at a very difficult time in my life. It took a few years, but eventually I became debt free and decided to become a volunteer for CAP. Although It's hard to describe the feeling

www.capuk.org

Together, we can make a significant impact on the lives of those struggling with debt, bringing light and restoring dignity and hope to those who need it most.

of being in debt, words like, all-consuming and disorientating certainly come to mind. Becoming debt free was on the other hand liberating, and I genuinely couldn't have managed it without continuous support from CAP.

John 10:10 says, "The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, ...." Debt effects individuals of all ages and backgrounds. In the current economic climate, many families rely on credit cards for essentials, including groceries, school uniforms, bills, childcare and rent. A minor change in circumstances can shift a family from "getting by" to being financially overwhelmed. Debt significantly impacts physical and mental health, relationships and self-confidence. Many who reach out to us experience feelings of shame, embarrassment, and failure.

We have been fully booked since the start of 2025, so, our Bangor CAP services are much in demand. We consider it a privilege to support those in need and seek to continue to provide a kind and holistic service, so we are currently keen to recruit for a new volunteer role as a CAP Advocate. No special financial expertise is needed.

To hear more about this, please contact me on 07553858867 or ashleenjohnston@capuk.org

Your support, whether through prayers, volunteering, or donations, is invaluable to us. If you would like to donate, please use the following details:

Danske Bank (Business Ac) Sort code 95-02-52 A/C No 81270176

#### July - Lambeg to Lisburn along the Lagan towpath



The group travelled by train to Lambeg and then walked the three miles to Lisburn along the Lagan towpath, and then visited the Lisburn Castle Gardens.





August - The Newry Canal Trail

Fifteen St Columbanus walkers enjoyed perfect weather for the 3½ mile Newry Canal trail along the towpath from Portadown to The Forge at Moneypenny's Lock where they had a picnic lunch and had an interesting time looking at the blacksmith's work. Of course the Ground Espresso cafe at the Old Pump House by the River Bann in Portadown was a popular refreshment stop. Moneypenney's Lock is called after the Moneypenney family who looked after the lock from the early 1800s until its closure in the mid 20th century.

Betty





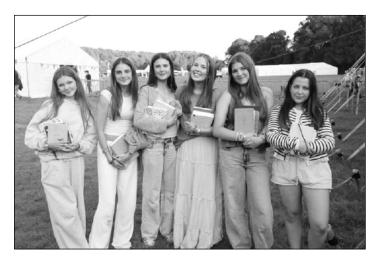
#### **FUNERALS**

#### July

4th: Campbell Graham formerly of Ranfurly Avenue

11th: Thomas (Tom) Scott McLellan formerly of Silverbirch Grove

**31st:** Eveline Atkinson formerly of Beaumont Drive





As I'm writing this, we're part-way through Jumpin' with a great few days still ahead, plus X-Cess! Summer Madness is in the past, but we're still so excited about what God did during the week in the lives of so many people. Across the UK it seems like God is working very powerfully – huge swathes of teens and young adults coming to church and faith for the first time – and we've seen that same trend in the ministries we've been running. People have been encountering God for the first time, or been sharing Jesus with their peers, and it's been so exciting to see. We're praying that X-Cess will be equally powerful for people, and that we'd keep serving the young people well in the new term.

#### Andrew











#### Our Worship

#### SEPTEMBER 2025

#### Wednesday 3rd September

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### Sunday 7th September Trinity 12

8.30 Holy Communion10.00 Cafe Church - Parish Centre11.30 Morning Prayer

#### Wednesday 10th September

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### Sunday 14th September Trinity 13

8.30 Holy Communion10.00 Good News at Ten & Children's Church11.30 Parish Communion6.30 United Service - BallyholmePresbyterian

#### Wednesday 17th September

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### Sunday 21st September Trinity 14

8.30 Holy Communion 10.00 Prayer & Praise Children's Church 11.30 Morning Prayer

#### Wednesday 24th September

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### Sunday 28th September Trinity 15

8.30 Holy Communion 10.00 Parish Communion & Children's Church

11.30 Morning Prayer



# Decorating the Church for Harvest

Donations of flowers are always very welcome but most of all we need willing hands.

If you are free on Saturday 11th October and are able to help it would be great to see you any time from 10.00am.

Many thanks

Irene

#### **OCTOBER 2025**

#### Wednesday 1st October

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### Sunday 5th October Trinity 16

8.30 Holy Communion 10.00 Cafe Church - Parish Centre 11.30 Morning Prayer

#### Wednesday 8th October

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### Sunday 12th October Harvest Trinity 17

8.30 Holy Communion10.00 Prayer & Praise Children's Church11.30 Parish Communion6.30 United Service - St Columbanus

#### Wednesday 15th October

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### **Sunday 19th October Trinity 18**

8.30 Holy Communion10.00 Good News at Ten & Children's Church11.30 Morning Prayer

#### Wednesday 22nd October

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

### Sunday 26th October 5th Sunday before Advent

8.30 Holy Communion 10.00 Parish Communion & Children's Church 11.30 Morning Prayer

#### Wednesday 29th October

10.30 Holy Communion - Kajiado Room

#### September 2025

**7th** Ruth Lynas

14th Heather Whitfield

21st Leanne Young

**28th** Patricia Stubbings

#### October 2025

5th Muriel Ryan

12th Harvest

**19th** Patricia Todd

**26th** Christine Johnstone