



The Rock

A Tale of Two Christmases

As December begins, it is natural that our thinking moves towards Christmas. Judging from the displays in shops and TV advertising, you might well think that Christmas has been here already for quite a while. Indeed it seems at time that there are two Christmases being celebrated at this time of year.

One Christmas seems to begin around mid-October, and focuses on the toys, gifts and food (not to mention a certain red-suited gentleman). In this Christmas, the birth of Jesus plays second fiddle to the anticipation of the presents to be left on Christmas morning; the gift of God for our salvation is not as thrilling as asking, "What's Santa bringing you?" This Christmas is largely secular; indeed God could be conveniently airbrushed from it, if desired.

But this type of Christmas is both wearying and short-lived. Wearying, in that it seems to begin earlier with every year, and short-lived, with a sense of anti-climax hitting at some point on Christmas evening or Boxing Day. Like me, you might have heard people say that Christmas is not the same when the children have grown

up. But Christmas's good news of great joy is "for all the people" (Luke 2:10), not just the children. Perhaps that feeling comes as a result of celebrating the wrong type of Christmas, or at least having the wrong focus.

The other type of Christmas enjoys the festivities, but keeps the focus on Jesus Christ. Advent is used as a season of anticipation, keeping Christmas as a time worth waiting for, reminding us of the patient faith of God's people before Christ as they waited for God's promises to come to light. This type of Christmas does not allow a follower of Jesus, St Nicolas, to eclipse the Master himself. I am amazed as how many adults are keen to talk about Santa at this time of year (usually to our daughters, not to me I hasten to add!).

Parish of Lisbellaw with Coolbuck

www.lisbellawparish.com

Rector: Rev. Bryan T Kerr, B.D., M.Phil

Tel. (028) 6638 7219

Email: rector@lisbellaw.net

Parish Reader: Miss Isobel Stewart

A TALE OF TWO CHRISTMASES

What a challenge to us as Christians to make the most of this season to talk about the Lord Jesus!

A Christ-focused Christmas uses and recognises the lights, the stars, the evergreen trees of life in a dark winter as pointers to the Saviour. The get-togethers with family and friends, the meals, the special time of rest are all received with thanksgiving to God, the giver of good things. The giving and receiving of gifts are clearly understood as imitating God, who loved us and gave himself for us in Christ. And of course, this type of Christmas is not really for December only, for it comes from a faith in Jesus and a life lived for Jesus every month of the year.

May you have a happy, holy and blessed Christmas, that is full of Christ and will be good news for you and all the people with whom you share it.

Parish Register

Holy Baptism

Sunday 14th August

Ben Alex Crawford

son of Gareth and Lorraine

The Limes, Drumeer Road

Sunday 11th September

Thomas James Forde

son of Keith and Sarah

Lower Cavanacarragh

Sunday 20th November

Scott Keith Irvine,

son of Keith and Deborah

Magonragh

Holy Matrimony

Saturday 17th September

Christopher James McDowell,

Main St, Fivemiletown

and Sophia Mary Callow,

Rathview Park, Lisbellaw

Christian Burial

Sunday 9th September

David John Millar, Gilford

formerly of Lisbellaw

Friday 4th November

Violet Mary Letitia Dane

Magonragh, Lisbellaw

Mrs Violet Dane was a faithful member of Coolbuck Church, and she bore her recent time of illness with patience and quiet dignity. We express our sympathy to Brian, Roberta & Trevor and all the family.

INTO 2012 Next year sees a number of significant events in the life of the Parish:

Coolbuck 150

Celebrating 150 years

It is the 150th anniversary of Coolbuck Church and as part of the celebrations, we are delighted to be welcoming our Bishop, the Rt. Revd. John McDowell, to Coolbuck on Sunday 15th January 2012 at 3.00 p.m.



The Mothers' Union celebrates 60 years of its life and will hold a special service at the beginning of February to mark this milestone.



ACCORDING TO MARK

Flower Festival 2012

And of course, during the final weekend of September 2012 (28th-30th), there will be the Flower Festival (DV). The theme will display scenes from the Gospel according to Mark. As part of the celebration we hope to mount an historical display relating to the churches, the village and the wider area. If you have any old photos or memorabilia that could be shown, please get in touch.

CAROL SINGING We hope to bring some seasonal cheer around the parish on the evening of Monday 19th December. We meet at the Parish Centre at 7.00 p.m., with hot drinks and festive grub to follow at the Rectory.

CAFÉ CHURCH resumes on Sunday 29th January at 6.30 p.m. in the Parish Centre. We welcome our old friends and mission partners from Serbia, Chris and Lotta Strajnic. Everyone welcome.

CHRISTMAS 2011

SUMMARY OF SERVICES

- **Carol Service**
Sunday 18th, 7.00 p.m.
- **Senior Parishioners' Communion**
Wednesday 21st, 2.30 p.m.
- **Christmas Eve**
11.00 p.m. Coolbuck
- **Christmas Day**, 9.30 a.m.
- **Sunday 1st January**, 11.00 a.m.

May Christ be your light, your joy and your focus this Christmas, and may you know God's blessing in 2012.

Bryan, Shirley, Hannah & Rachel Kerr

Church Services

Sunday 4th December	Holy Communion <i>Exodus 32: Worshipping the Idol</i>	11.00 a.m.
Sunday 11th	Morning Prayer <i>Exodus 33-34: The Glory of the Gospel</i>	11.00 a.m.
Sunday 18th	Holy Communion Family Service Carol Service	9.45 a.m. 11.00 a.m. 7.00 p.m.
Christmas Eve	First Communion of Christmas	11.00 p.m. <i>Coolbuck Church</i>
Christmas Day	Holy Communion	9.30 a.m.
Sunday 1st January	Holy Communion <i>The Naming of Jesus</i>	11.00 a.m.
Sunday 8th	Morning Prayer	11.00 a.m.
Sunday 15th	Holy Communion Family Service	9.45 a.m. 11.00 a.m.
Sunday 22nd	Morning Prayer	11.00 a.m.
Sunday 29th	A Service of the Word <i>Café Church in the Parish Centre</i>	11.00 a.m. 6.30 p.m.

SUNDAY CLUB begins in the Church at 11.00 a.m. We encourage and welcome families to worship together in the Church for the first part of the Service, before members of Sunday Club begin their teaching in the Parish Centre.

- Sunday Club party, Saturday 17th December,
- Sunday Club does not meet on Christmas Day or New Year's Day

EVENING PRAYER IN COOLBUCK 3.00 p.m.

Holy Communion, 11.00 p.m. Christmas Eve

(No service Sundays 25th December or 1st January)

SENIOR PARISHIONERS' HOLY COMMUNION AT CHRISTMAS

Wednesday 21st December at 2.30 p.m. in the Parish Centre.

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Sunday sermons online at www.lisbellawparish.com/sermons