Citizens of Banbridge have planned celebrations to mark the life of Mr Joseph Scriven of (Seapatrick) Banbridge, born 10th September 1819 (moved from Ireland to Canada 1844) and more commonly known for his authorship of the universally sung hymn *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*.

The community will mark the bicentenary of his birth via a range of events throughout the town including the singing of his famous hymn within participating local places of worship during their respective morning services on Sunday 15th September.

An ecumenical service will be held that evening in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Parish Church, Banbridge, at 6.30pm.

Local Arrangements sourced so far:

BBC *Songs of Praise* filmed in Banbridge on the 27th of February (screened 17th March to 1.2 million viewers, available on BBC iPlayer) – the recordings included:

Interview with a local historian (Jason Diamond) about the life of Joseph Scriven; interviews with congregational members about the hymn, its religious meaning or what it means to them; filming took place in St Patrick’s Parish Church where there is a commemorative stained glass window (dedicated by Rt Rev Henry Scriven (great-great-nephew of J. Scriven) in April 2002) with an additional filming visit to the homeland where Joseph was born and baptised.

Locally: discussion with local clergy to progress the initiative have met with their full support and are at an advanced stage of planning; the updating and reprinting of the historical document regarding Scriven's life has been completed.

Country wide: discussions have been held with the Salvation Army who throughout their Irish branches, will take part in praise on 15th September; all 12 Northern Irish Cathedrals have confirmed participation during their Sunday services on 15th September, with this inclusion now spreading through Ireland (Galway and both Dublin cathedrals confirmed) and further afield to Canada; smaller regional churches and their associated congregations throughout Northern Ireland have also confirmed their involvement; Bishop Henry Scriven (great-great-nephew of J. Scriven) has accepted his invitation and will be assisting local clergy in the celebration; significant exposure received from regional and national media in support of this celebratory event.

Given the nature of this memorial and the inter-denominational context of the celebration, we will be inviting dignitaries to attend. These include: the Canadian High Commission and the Lord Lieutenant of Co. Down, to the evening service in St Patricks Parish Church, on 15th September. It would be wonderful if you can spread the word of this venture through your contacts in the Society of Friends in the hope that they too could join us in celebrating this famous Irish man and his legacy to the world on this special occasion.