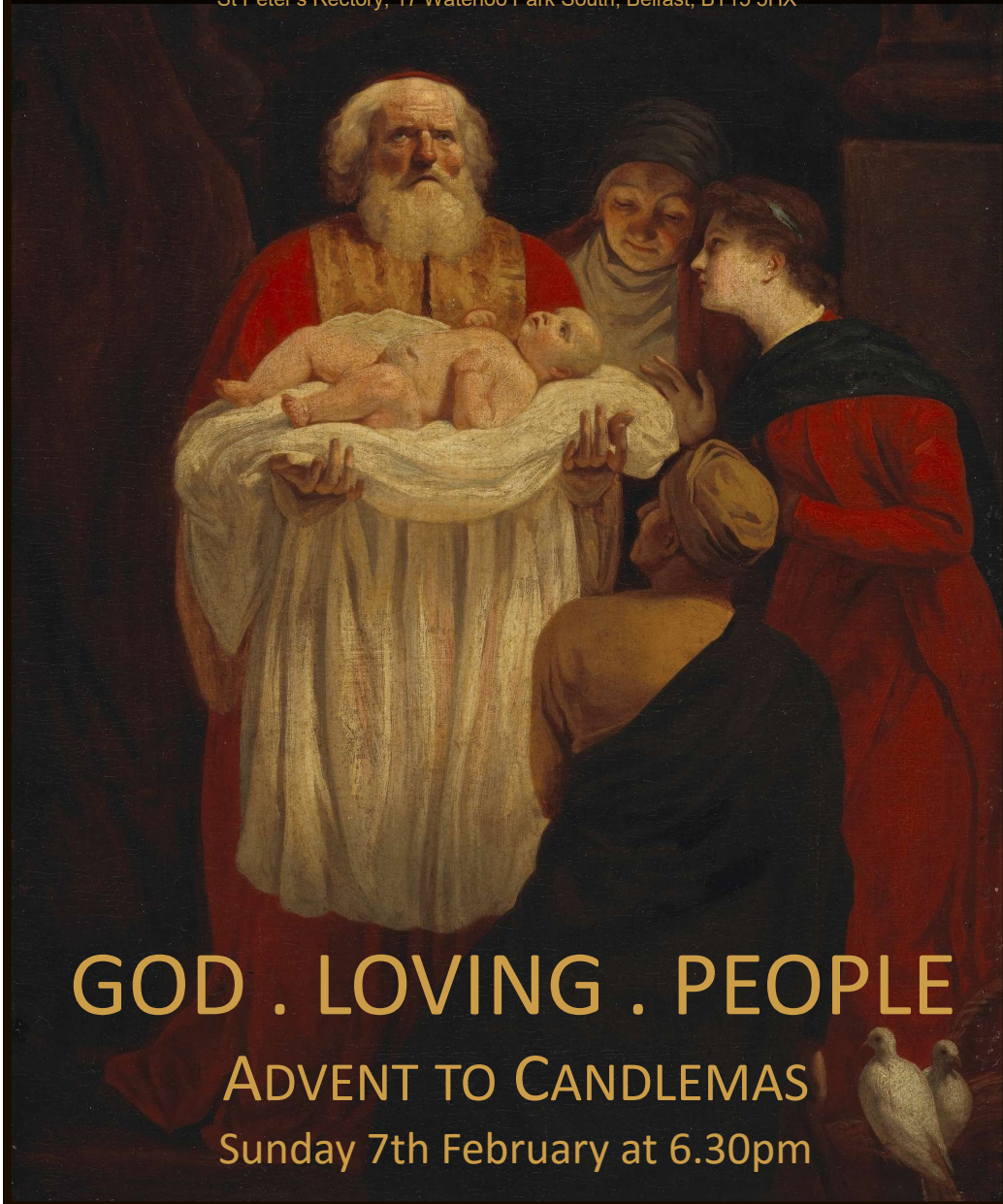


THE PARISH OF ST PETER AND ST JAMES
BELFAST

PARISH NOTES

FEBRUARY 2016

Rector: The Rev'd Brian Lacey
St Peter's Rectory, 17 Waterloo Park South, Belfast, BT15 5HX



GOD . LOVING . PEOPLE

ADVENT TO CANDLEMAS

Sunday 7th February at 6.30pm

CHURCH OF IRELAND BISHOPS' APPEAL

Bishops' Appeal is the Church's World Aid and Development Programme. It was set up by the Bishops of the Church in response to the commands in the Bible to bring good news to the poor and relief to the suffering.

Aims of this role

- to educate the Church at home about the needs and concerns of people in the less developed world and the causes of poverty;
- to encourage Church members to examine the reasons for the problems facing the less fortunate in the world and to consider what we can do to change conditions;
- to reach out in God's name to those who need our help;
- to encourage informed prayer and prayerful action aimed at strengthening the poor; to raise the funds needed to allow Bishops' Appeal to support development projects and alleviate the suffering caused by disasters, both natural and man-made.

Bishops' Appeal works through partner Non-Governmental Organisations and Mission Agencies to implement Christ's "Mission Statement" to feed the hungry, lift the burden of poverty from the poor and bring freedom and hope to the oppressed. It does not fund development and emergency work directly. Our partners have the local knowledge and resources to ensure that projects for which they apply for funding are of maximum benefit to the peoples and areas in which they work.

Bishops' Appeal contributes to relief of suffering in time of emergencies whether natural or man-made. However, our main concern is to support ongoing development in the fields of sustainable agriculture, health, including HIV/AIDS, and education in many parts of the world. We aim to enable people to have more control over their own lives and futures so that they are less dependent on others than they are today.

Half the world's population lives on less than two dollars a day; indeed, over 300 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than one dollar a day. It is estimated that 30,000 people die every day from poverty related diseases. The Christian Church cannot remain silent in the face of this ongoing tragedy and injustice. Bishops' Appeal is the Church of Ireland's voice calling for an end to this suffering and working with others to make a difference where it can.

+Patrick Rooke
Chair, Bishops' Appeal

Please give generously using the enclosed envelope, leaving it on the collection plate in church or sending it to the Parish Office. Thank you.

RECTOR'S NOTES

SERMON SUMMARIES

On the **First Sunday of Advent** (29th November) I spoke about my encounters with students of other Christian denominations, during my time as Chaplain to a Further Education College. I was remarkably impressed by the emphasis that some churches place upon their members having a solid understanding of the Bible, and a desire to wrestle with and apply the Biblical text. To the detriment of the Church of Ireland, many Anglican Christians are not regularly reading their Bible, let alone studying it. My concern is that for any parish to grow, its grassroots members must take their discipleship seriously, and this includes committing themselves to reading and wrestling with the ideas expressed in the Holy Scriptures.

On the **Second Sunday of Advent** (6th December) we thought about the importance of confession and absolution during our regular worship. In the same way that people who go to the gym often look at themselves in a mirror to determine where they think their bodies need to improve, so too do Christians need to reflect upon our actions and attitudes, and see what parts of our souls we need God to work on. The moments of silence prior to saying the Confession should never simply be a time of waiting before we speak; we should use that time to look in the spiritual mirror and allow the Holy Spirit to point out our strengths and weaknesses, and then offer them up humbly to God.

On **Christmas Eve** (24th December) we reflected upon the extent of the suffering we feel when we are rejected or abandoned by the ones we love, whether it be friends falling out, or a marriage ending in divorce, or a parent disowning their child. We thought about the verse from the opening chapter of John's Gospel, in which he states

that Christ “came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him” and I explained that God faced that same rejection and abandonment from the people that he loved, when his Son was despised, scorned, tortured, and killed by humanity.

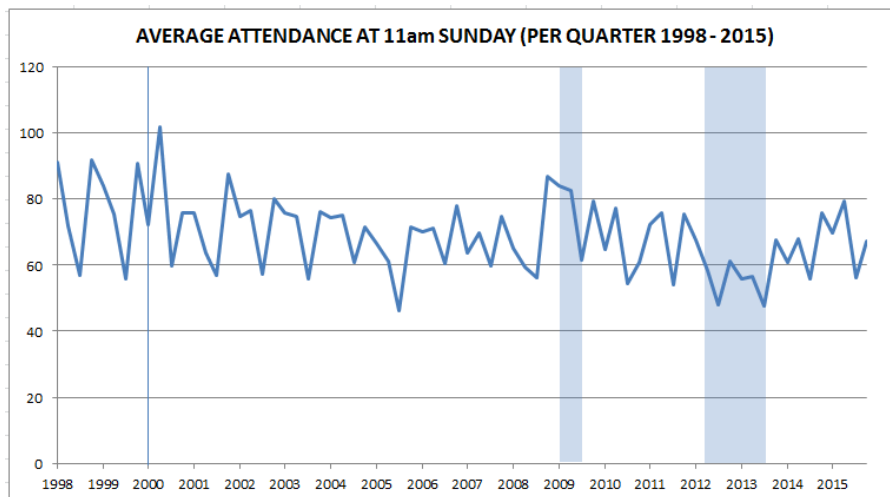
On **Christmas Day** (25th December) we reflected upon the two divine encounters that the Shepherds had on the morning that our Lord Jesus was born. The first encounter was supernatural, mysterious, and glorious: the Shepherds were dazzled by the good tidings and the heavenly singing of the Angels. The second encounter was very ordinary, perhaps even bleak: the Shepherds saw Mary and Joseph, cold and tired, caring for a little baby lying in an animal’s feeding trough. I suggested that such a difference of experience between the two encounters is reflected in two approaches to worship and Church building: some people want plain, simple, and straightforward, whereas others want ostentation, grandeur, and majesty. One group see God in the earthly and the ordinary, whereas the other group see God breaking powerfully into our world from heaven. Both types of Christian need to learn from each other: we all need to learn and appreciate that God is not limited in his revelation to us: for he can reveal himself both through the wondrous singing of a choir of angels, and through the quiet breaths of a sleeping child. He is the God of ordinary and the extraordinary.

On the **Second Sunday of the Epiphany** (17th January) I explained that government statistics indicate that nearly half of the people who go to Accident & Emergency could be treated just as effectively – and even more efficiently – if they had gone to the Chemist, or to their GP, or to a Minor Injuries Unit. Likewise, parishioners tend to think that if they have a spiritual problem of some sort, then the only person qualified to help them is the Rector. Although there are many occasions when the clergy should be approached, particularly if you specifically need them in their

role as priests or theologians, this is not always the case. Sometimes your spiritual needs could be more effectively addressed by other lay people, as every baptised Christian is a lay minister, with God-given gifts that can and should be used for helping others. As such, all Christians are called to pray for each other, to offer basic Christian advice to each other, and to show compassion to each other. None of these things are uniquely “the job of the clergy”. Rather, every Christian should think of themselves as a Lay Minister, and then ask the Holy Spirit to give them the wisdom and courage to exercise their spiritual gifts in order to build up the Church, and bring glory to God.

PARISH GROWTH/DECLINE

The size of a congregation is not the best way to determine the “success” of a parish, but it is one of the very few forms of quantitative data available to us. So for someone not particularly good with numbers, I am quite fastidious when it comes to recording the attendance figures for worship in St Peter’s on a spreadsheet, because it enables me to discern trends of growth/decline over recent years. The end of another year always makes me excited because it means I can add more lines to my graphs!



The graph on the previous page shows the number of people at our 11am service each Sunday (averaged across a three month period) from 1998 until 2015. To give you a sense of chronology, the vertical line on the left hand side indicates the turn of the Millennium, and the two shaded areas on the right hand side indicate the two vacancies without a rector: the shorter vacancy between Canon McCollum and the Rev'd Dorrian, and the longer vacancy between the Rev'd Dorrian and myself.

As the graph is based on quarterly figures for each year, there are peaks and troughs at regular intervals, mainly lower numbers in the summer months, but higher numbers around Easter/St Peter's Day, and Harvest/Remembrance Sunday.

It is hopefully clear to see that our average attendance fluctuates between 60 to 80 worshippers, depending on the time of year. The number of worshippers was higher before the turn of the Millennium, and contrastingly the number was lower during the second vacancy. However, in the last couple of years we have been staggering our way back to the 60 to 80 range. Compared to the rural parishes, that's nothing to write home about, but for a city parish surrounded by other Anglican churches, it's certainly not a portent of doom. The challenge for us, however, will be to increase our number of worshippers beyond the confines of that pattern, by encouraging our existing members to come to church more frequently, and by appealing to non-members to join us and stay with us.

FUNDRAISING

As always our **Christmas Sale and Coffee Morning** did exceedingly well. In fact, some might say that this year was the best for quite some time. All in all, we raised £2324.15 which is well up on previous years. The coordinator was Sandra Davison, to whom we give genuine thanks for a job very well done. But of course there

were many others involved, helping in a wide variety of ways: publicising the event, setting up the room, organising stalls, taking money at the door, preparing and serving refreshments, preparing children's activities, etc. Thank you to all who helped in any way, particularly to Mr and Mrs Claus!

We had a packed church for a concert given by the **Cavehill Community Choir**. Many thanks to Annette Beattie who coordinated the event, and to her team who ensured that everything ran smoothly. The event raised £1062.68 for parish funds.

For the first time in a very long time, we asked parishioners to give a **special donation** in addition to their regular Free Will Offering. I always loathe placing an additional financial burden upon our members, but honestly we do need this little bit of extra money in order to balance our income and expenditure. To encourage the members of our congregation, I had stated that I would not shave until a sizable amount of cash had been received. The rapid growth of my facial hair seemed to have persuaded many of you to dig deep, and I am very pleased to say that a total of £2195 was raised. Our Select Vestry has determined that we will need to raise a special collection twice a year, which is the same as in most other parishes, so on that basis if you ever see me with an unkempt beard, you know its nearly time for another collection! Many thanks to all who contributed this year.

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

During the next couple of months we are constitutionally obliged to focus our attention upon the administration of the parish: we will review our membership, prepare the Annual Report, and gear up to elect/appoint the various Officers and Committees that become vacant at Easter.

During February we must update our **list of registered members**, and according to the rules of the Church, this specifically refers to those individuals or families who have made a recorded financial contribution to parish funds during the past year. As well as adding the names of new members who have signed up, we also remove the names of those who have recently died, or who have not made a Free Will Offering since the start of 2015. The meeting to review our membership will be held in the Clergy Vestry on Sunday 21st February immediately following our 11am service. Having an up to date list is important, as only our registered members are permitted to vote in our elections, and to serve on our committees. The most recent list of registered members can be found on the notice boards at the back of the church. If you do not see your name on the list, and believe that you should already be on it, or else you would like to register with us officially, then please speak to me or one of the Churchwardens as soon as possible before Sunday 21st February. For new members of our congregation, please note that registering as a member is different from being listed on our parish database by our Parish Secretary Anne, or receiving FWO envelopes from our FWO Secretary Noel.

ANNUAL REPORT AND GENERAL VESTRY MEETING

The **Annual Report** is published before Easter each year, and includes information about how the parish is doing in terms of mission, ministries, and management of the parish, as well as an overview of our finances. This report should be available to parishioners at least one week before the date of our General Vestry Meeting, giving you plenty of time to read through it. During the meeting, rather than repeating all of the information in a speech, I will offer parishioners the opportunity to ask questions or make comments on what you have read. Our Honorary Treasurer, Ashlee, will then talk us through the written accounts, and again there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

Like last year, the **General Vestry** meeting will be held in the church immediately following a shorter-than-usual act of worship at 11am. In addition to reflecting upon my report and the statement of accounts, we will appoint/elect our officers and committees for the year ahead. We will also choose which charities to which we would like to donate during the year. The General Vestry meeting will begin at approximately 11.45pm on Sunday 13th March. We will aim to have our business completed within an hour!

PAROCHIAL ELECTIONS

Blue **Nomination Forms** for our parochial elections are now available at the back of the church. We always need new faces and a fresh perspective on the management bodies of the parish, so please don't consider yourself to be too young, too inexperienced, or too new to the parish. Likewise, we need people who have proven their lasting commitment to the parish, so please don't rule yourself out as being too old. Put your name forward for one or more of the positions available, and allow the democratic process to unfold. Even if you are not elected this year, there are plenty more years to come when you can be of service to the Church.

The management committee of the parish is called the **Select Vestry**. This name comes from the fact that it is a committee consisting of a select group of people, which historically met in the Vestry (the robing room in the church). The Select Vestry consists of me, the two Churchwardens, the two Glebewardens, and twelve representatives elected by and from the registered members of the parish. Constitutionally, the Select Vestry manages our buildings and their contents, our finances, and our employees. For this reason, we need a wide variety of people to volunteer for the committee, with skills including DIY, human resources, accountancy, and law. But we also need people of all ages and backgrounds who have a passion for seeing our parish grow into a

thriving Christian community. So when we come to elect our new committee, we need to elect individuals who have the appropriate skills and experience, but who are also regular worshippers and active members of our congregation.

In addition to electing twelve representatives to serve on the Select Vestry, four **Officers** also need to be elected/appointed. Firstly we will choose two Churchwardens, who will be responsible for overseeing the logistics of our worship: opening the church, turning on the lights, heat, and sound system, providing worshippers with everything they need, and generally being on hand to help me as may be necessary. We are fortunate in St Peter's to have a dedicated team of Sacristans who carry out a lot of these duties on behalf of the Churchwardens. One of the Churchwardens is appointed by me, and the other is elected by the registered members. Both are ex-officio members of the Select Vestry and the Events & Organisations Committee. Secondly we will choose two Glebewardens, who will be responsible for overseeing our buildings and grounds, doing a bit of DIY (with the help of other capable parishioners), and liaising with electricians, plumbers, and builders. One of the Glebewardens is appointed by me, and the other is elected by the registered members. Both are ex-officio members of the Select Vestry and the Fabric & Furnishings Committee.

Registered members also need to elect three representatives onto each of the following **committees**: the Finance & Administration Committee, the Fabric & Furnishings Committee, and the Events & Organisations Committee. These committees consider issues in detail, and act for and on behalf of the Select Vestry to some extent, subject to its ultimate authority. There are three ex-officio members of each committee (myself and two Officers), but the other three members represent the registered members, and do not necessarily need to be members of the Select Vestry as well.

You will also elect two **Sidespersons**, who – in addition to two Sidespersons that I choose – will assist the Churchwardens throughout the year, and deputise for them when they are absent. This is a perfect role either for a former Churchwarden who wants to help out occasionally, or for someone who would like to learn the ropes of being a Churchwarden but who cannot commit to being in church every Sunday.

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY

The only Saint's Day this month is the feast day of St Brigid, which will be commemorated with a celebration of Holy Communion at 7.30pm on Monday 1st February.

Our Family Service in the Halls will be held at 11am on Sunday 14th February. As usual, we all stay together in the church until the introduction to the service when families will be invited to leave for the Main Hall if they so choose.

Quinquagesima (also known as the Sunday before Lent) falls on 7th February, marking 50 days until Easter Day. Ash Wednesday will be celebrated during the following week with our regular mid-week service of Holy Communion at 10.30am, and then the special penitential service called "A Service for Ash Wednesday" at 7.30pm that evening. This day marks the beginning of Lent, which lasts throughout most of February and March.

LESSON READERS

The following parishioners are on the rota to read at the 11am Sunday services. If you are unable to read on your appointed Sunday, please contact the Warden of Readers, Forde Patterson, tel 93 365 900.

| Date | First Reading | Second Reading | Third Reading |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 7th February | Daphne McClements | Anne Roberts | The Rector |
| 14th February | Caroline O'Kane | Tom Campbell | The Rector |
| 21st February | Hilary Shields | Dora Hanna | The Rector |
| 28th February | Philip Williamson | Wes Holmes | The Rector |

CHURCH SERVICES

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| MONDAY 7.30pm | 1st FEBRUARY Holy Communion | ST BRIGID <i>traditional</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am | 3rd FEBRUARY Holy Communion | MID-WEEK SERVICE <i>modern</i> |
| SUNDAY 9am 11am 6.30pm | 7th FEBRUARY Holy Communion Holy Communion Advent to Candlemas | QUINQUAGESIMA <i>traditional</i> <i>modern</i> <i>traditional</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am 7.30pm | 10th FEBRUARY Holy Communion Penitential Service | ASH WEDNESDAY <i>modern</i> <i>modern</i> |
| SUNDAY 9am 11am | 14th FEBRUARY Holy Communion Morning Prayer | THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT <i>modern</i> <i>modern</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am | 17th FEBRUARY Holy Communion | MID-WEEK SERVICE <i>modern</i> |
| SUNDAY 9am 11am 6.30pm | 21st FEBRUARY Holy Communion Holy Communion Choral Evensong | THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT <i>modern</i> <i>modern</i> <i>traditional</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am | 24th FEBRUARY Holy Communion | MID-WEEK SERVICE <i>modern</i> |
| SUNDAY 9am 11am | 28th FEBRUARY Holy Communion Morning Prayer | THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT <i>modern</i> <i>modern</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am | 2nd MARCH Holy Communion | MID-WEEK SERVICE <i>modern</i> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| SUNDAY 9am 11am 6.30pm | 6th MARCH Holy Communion Holy Communion Choral Evensong | MOTHERING SUNDAY <i>modern</i> <i>traditional</i> <i>traditional</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am | 9th MARCH Holy Communion | MID-WEEK SERVICE <i>modern</i> |
| SUNDAY 11am | 13th MARCH Morning Prayer | MISSION SUNDAY <i>modern</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am | 16th MARCH Holy Communion | MID-WEEK SERVICE <i>modern</i> |
| SUNDAY 9am 11am 6.30pm | 20th MARCH Holy Communion Morning Prayer Choral Evensong | PALM SUNDAY <i>modern</i> <i>modern</i> <i>traditional</i> |
| MONDAY 7.30pm | 21st MARCH Late Evening Office | FIG MONDAY <i>modern</i> |
| TUESDAY 7.30pm | 22nd MARCH Evening Prayer | HOLY TUESDAY <i>modern</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am 7.30pm | 23rd MARCH Holy Communion Compline | SPY WEDNESDAY <i>modern</i> <i>traditional</i> |
| THURSDAY 7.30pm | 24th MARCH Holy Communion | MAUNDY THURSDAY <i>traditional</i> |
| FRIDAY 7.30pm | 25th MARCH Tenebrae | GOOD FRIDAY <i>modern</i> |
| SUNDAY 9am 11am | 27th MARCH Holy Communion Holy Communion | EASTER DAY <i>modern</i> <i>modern</i> |
| WEDNESDAY 10.30am | 30th MARCH Holy Communion | MID-WEEK SERVICE <i>modern</i> |

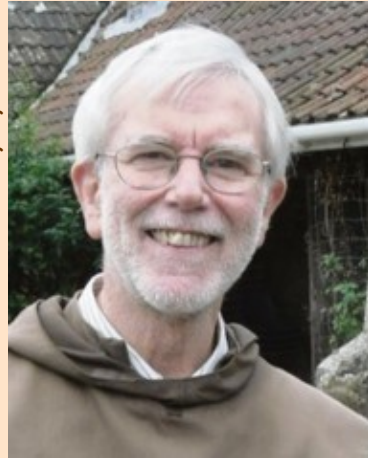
| February Diary | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|-----------|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| | 1 Saint Brigid 7.30pm Holy Communion 8pm Finance Committee 8pm Badminton | 2 10.30am Crafty Goodness 6pm Beavers 7pm Cubs | 3 10.30am Holy Communion and refreshments 2pm Bridge 6.30pm PhysioPilates 7.30pm Choir | 4 10am Little Cherubs 6pm Rainbows 7pm Brownies 8pm Guides | 5 10.30am PhysioPilates 11.30am Bible Study 4.30pm Speech and Drama | 6 |
| 7 Transfiguration Sunday 9am Holy Communion 11am Holy Communion & Sunday School 6.30pm Advent to Candlemas — special service | 8 7.30pm Select Vestry 8pm Badminton | 9 10.30am Crafty Goodness 2.30pm Ladies' Guild 6pm Beavers 7pm Cubs | 10 Ash Wednesday 10.30am Holy Communion and refreshments 2pm Bridge 6.30pm PhysioPilates 7.30pm A service for Ash Wednesday 8pm Choir | 11 10am Little Cherubs 6pm Rainbows 7pm Brownies 7.30pm Bible Study 8pm Guides | 12 10.30am PhysioPilates 4.30pm Speech and Drama | 13 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|-----------|
| 14 9am Holy Communion 11am Morning Prayer & Family Service (tea/coffee) | 15 8pm Badminton | 16 10.30am Crafty Goodness 6pm Beavers 7pm Cubs 8pm Compassionate Friends | 17 10.30am Holy Communion and refreshments 11.30am Fabric Committee 2pm Bridge 6.30pm PhysioPilates 7.30pm Choir | 18 10am Little Cherubs 6pm Rainbows 7pm Brownies 7.45pm Historical Society 8pm Guides | 19 10.30am PhysioPilates 11.30am Bible Study | 20 |
| 21 9am Holy Communion 11am Holy Communion & Sunday School 6.30pm Choral Evensong | 22 <i>Deadline for material to be with Anne for March Parish Notes</i> 8pm Badminton | 23 10.30 Crafty Goodness 1pm Events Committee 6pm Beavers 7pm Cubs | 24 10.30am Holy Communion and refreshments 2pm Bridge 6.30pm PhysioPilates 7.30pm Choir | 25 10am Little Cherubs 6pm Rainbows 7pm Brownies 7.30pm Bible Study 8pm Guides | 26 10.30am PhysioPilates 4.30pm Speech and Drama | 27 |
| 28 9am Holy Communion 11am Morning Prayer & Sunday School (tea/coffee) | 29 8pm Badminton | | | | | |

Rev'd Brother Damian Kirkpatrick, SSF

9th May 1941 – 17th January 2016

Brother Damian came to St Peter's in 1986 where he assisted Canon Harris as his Curate. He was a Londoner, who became a Brother in the Anglican Society of St Francis and was appointed Guardian of Belfast Friary Society of St Francis from 1970—the friary was situated on the Deerpark Road. No one who met him could forget that wonderful smile and his caring, loving nature, or his sense of fun. As one parishioner put it he was all pervading love. Nor will we forget him arriving in his brown habit, with the white rope with the three



knots signifying charity, chastity and obedience, and wearing sandals. He was a great support to Canon Harris, and would have found himself a welcome visitor at the Rectory with his friendly manner as well as his practical support. Like Canon Harris and Mrs Harris, in times of illness and bereavement, Brother Damian was a great comfort to many parishioners, with his quiet, reassuring manner, and also his helpful prayers.

The young people of the parish apparently flocked to the Youth Club on a Sunday night, where he played the guitar, and organised hockey matches and other activities. He also went down to the Sunday School (then held in the old church hall) where he played the ukulele, no doubt to the enjoyment of all.

Brother Damian was also Chaplain to the Royal Hospitals in Belfast, and it is said that in the Children's Hospital the children loved to see both him and Brother Raymond coming into the ward. He also visited in the main hospital, and was a great comfort to those he went to see. In a different role, he also served as Chaplain to the staff and prisoners at the Crumlin Road Jail.

Brother Damian's 'farewell' service was held on 26th October 1988. At it he played the ukulele and also showed the children how to share—he

gave them long spoons which meant they couldn't feed themselves so they had to feed each other.

It is an indication as to how highly Brother Damian was regarded in St Peter's, that he is always spoken of with great affection and, later, when he had gone back to England, on his occasional visits to St Peter's, he was surrounded by those whose lives he had touched. Most recently he was with us on Monday 24th August last year, where he joined us for Holy Communion for St Bartholomew's Day. It was a privilege for us to have had him with us, even for a short time, but he will always be remembered for the difference he made to our lives, either in times of pastoral care or simply as a dear friend of St Peter's. Many of us will have our own special memories of him.

Brother Damian died peacefully at St Oswald's Hospice in Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, on Sunday 17th January. His funeral will be held in St Michael's Parish Church in Alnwick on Wednesday 3rd February at 1pm. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

[Compiled by some of Brother Damian's many friends in the parish.]

Ladies' Guild

On Tuesday 9th February at 2.30pm we will be joined by Mrs Nisha Tandon from ArtsEkta. ArtsEkta was created in 2006 in response to a growing need in the market for arts based engagement that promotes the diverse ethnic arts of Northern Ireland's multicultural society.



This should be a very interesting event to which you are all invited. As always you don't have to be a Ladies' Guild member to join us at one of our meetings.

If you would like to attend but don't have transport please contact me or one of our members and we will be happy to arrange transport for you.

Anne Stewart
Hon Sec (tel: 9096 6597)

PARISH REGISTER

Holy Baptism

"Born again of water and the Holy Spirit ..."

*Cal Joseph Kurson, Glantane Drive,
son of Cheryl and Ciaran Kurson
on 6th December 2015*

Christian Burial

"At rest in the Lord."

Eileen Condry

Eileen was born in England, and raised in Brighton. She trained as a teacher, and met her husband Edgar. During the Second World War, Northern Ireland was considered to be a safer place to live than England, so already pregnant with her first daughter, Helen, the family moved; their second daughter Heather was born soon after. She was involved in parish life in St Peter's through her leadership for many years of the Thursday Club for women of the Church. Eileen lived in her home in Slievecoole Park until recently, when she moved to the Lansdowne Care Home. Her funeral was held in St Peter's on Saturday 29th November, with her Committal in Roselawn Crematorium. We send our condolences to Helen, Heather, and the wider family.

Chris Bentham

Chris was raised in Stranmillis in south Belfast, where he attended St Bartholomew's Parish Church, as well as being involved in the Boys' Brigade at Fisherwick Presbyterian. He attended night classes at Belfast Tech, leading to his employment as an engineer, first in Mackeys and then in Shorts. He served in the latter for over forty years, working his way up to management level. He met his wife, Mary, in Botanic Gardens, and together they moved to north Belfast, where Chris built

their home in Slievecoole Park, and they raised two children, Joe and Christine. They left their home parishes and joined St Peter's. Chris helped with the Scouts, before eventually becoming a member of the Choir. Alongside friends, including Derek Noblett and Hugo O'Neill, he did repair work around the church and halls for many years, and was instrumental in keeping St Peter's in such good condition as it currently stands. He will be fondly remembered by many in the parish community. He passed away on 29th November. His funeral was held in St Peter's on Friday 4th December, with his Committal at Knockbreda Cemetery. We express our sympathy to Mary, Joe, Christine, and their family.

Bond Syms

Bond was born and raised in north Belfast, attending St Silas' Parish Church with his parents. He was a leader in Sunday School and a member of the Choir. He was also involved in the Boys' Brigade and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. He attended Stranmillis College, and upon graduation became a Geography Teacher. He later was promoted to Vice Principal at Newtownabbey Community High School. He was interested in both listening to and playing music, becoming a member of the Arts Committee of Newtownabbey Borough Council, and Chairman of the Mossgrove Youth Musical Festival. In his younger days he played sports, particularly squash, table tennis, and rugby. Although he never married, he had a good relationship with his cousins and their families. After a four year illness, Bond passed away on Friday 15th January. His funeral was in St Peter's on Thursday 21st January, followed by the Committal in Carnmoney Cemetery. We remember his cousins and the wider family at this sad time.

NORTH BELFAST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Thursday 18th February

7.45pm, Minor Hall

Speaker: David Johnston

Topic: Gracehill

Everyone welcome

Parish Notes in colour!

There are

full colour versions of

Parish Notes on our website.

Visit

www.stpeters.connor.anglican.org
and click on "News".

Advent Reflections

Each Wednesday evening during Advent we had a service of Compline in the North Aisle of St Peter's, during which some of our parishioners spoke to us about their Christian faith. Here is Ashlee McCune's Advent Reflection:



With pleasing festive synchronicity, my youngest son, Henry, was due to be born on Christmas Day four years ago. However, he arrived seven weeks prematurely in early November and spent the next month in an incubator. It was six long days before I was allowed to hold him for the first time before he was slipped back inside and reconnected to tubes and machines.

I sat beside him for hours upon hours, willing him to breathe and grow. I was weary in my soul and tired in my very bones. I waited and I grew tired of waiting, and at some point I accepted that it is ok to have need and no answers, to be small and have not enough strength. There was nothing to do but be still, just wait and pray.

Now, as Halloween slips almost seamlessly into Christmas, it would be easy to bypass the season of Advent altogether but I love this period of quiet reflection and anticipation. It reminds me of my Henry, of dark days and of waiting, of hope and quiet prayers.

I think too of Mary, of the quiet anticipation of the Christ child and the profound truth that God was made man. And in the quiet, tender evenings, before the house is festooned and full, I remember to be still, just wait and pray.

As we immerse ourselves in the story of Jesus, these are the two questions I have been considering: why was He born and how does His birth affect me?

Why was Jesus born

Such a simple question and yet when I came to articulate the reasons I only managed a rather turgid (in my hands) theological tour through the prophecies of Isaiah, Micah, Psalms, Hosea and Daniel, followed by some greeting-card style platitudes.

Both were inadequate and failed to convey anything that I wanted to express. So I looked at what Jesus said himself and found a whole host of reasons that resonated more deeply (to seek and save the lost, to serve, to bear witness to the

truth, to bear our sins, to give his life as a ransom, that we might have life and have it abundantly).

All of these are true and worthy of contemplation but for now I'll confine myself to 1 Timothy 2: 3:

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

These few lines encapsulate the meaning of the incarnation for me. God loves us and desires a relationship with us and sent Christ:

- For all people (not for a chosen few at a particular time and place but for Jew and Gentile, good and bad, for all of us sitting here thousands of miles away and thousands of years later)
- To be saved
- To come to the knowledge of the truth

Christ became man so that he could reveal the Father to us and serve as our access to him. He is the very embodiment of divine love and the ransom reveals the extent to which God was willing to go to reclaim humanity.

Why was he born as a baby?

Jesus arrived not as the glorious, conquering Messiah the Jewish people expected but as a baby, one of the most helpless and vulnerable of all the newborn creatures on earth, born in the lowliest circumstances imaginable. Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, could not have vanquished a fly, let alone darkness and death, at his birth.

Athanasius, the 4th century theologian, reflected on how Christ made himself accessible to us:

For one who wanted to make a display the thing would have been just to appear and dazzle the beholders. But for Him Who came to heal and to teach the way was not merely to dwell here, but to put Himself at the disposal of those who needed Him, and to be manifested according as they could bear it, not vitiating the value of the Divine appearing by exceeding their capacity to receive it. (St Athanasius – On the Incarnation)

God is not wanting to dazzle but to heal and to teach and he accomplishes this by Christ embracing the entire human experience from birth to death.

Finally, as Justin Welby remarked, if Almighty God can be laid in a manger, there is nowhere that is not fitting for him to come and no person who is unfit to receive him.

How does it affect me?

We often speak of the “the Christmas Story” and, with its angels, virgin birth and God-made-man, the nativity has all the markings of a great myth. We could so easily take it for granted and let it become just another facet of the festive season amongst all the other trappings of Christmas.

That’s why I think it is important during Advent to create some space to ponder the fact that it isn’t just a story, to shake ourselves out of comfort and apathy, and to approach with wonder the coming birth. We are neither retelling a fable, nor commemorating a historical event – we are celebrating the very manifestation of God’s love for us. The 13th century German theologian Meister Eckhart asked what good is it that Christ was born in a stable in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago if he is not also born in me?

I will touch briefly on three ways in which Christ has affected my life, namely, inspiring *gratitude* and providing *comfort* and *clarity*.

Gratitude

When I think of the beauty of heaven coming to a dirty stable, the immensity of God becoming a tiny child like the ones I held in my own arms (and this child bearing the weight of the world and ultimately dying for us) it is incredibly humbling and makes me want to make God glad that he gave life to someone who appreciates the gift.

People often speak of happiness as a goal – but few of us can simply decide to be happy; you cannot simply flick a mental switch, especially in times of trouble or despair, and set your mood to “happy”. Rather, I think happiness is a consequence of other things which we *can* decide on, and that it is a state of doing rather than being. I can consciously count my blessings and feel grateful. I can let that gratitude inform my actions and try to live a kinder, more loving existence. These are choices – and the result is not only a happy heart but a joyful one.

Comfort

Of course there is comfort in believing in a loving God who wants a relationship with us, who loves us enough to send His son to die for us. Comfort too in redemption by God’s grace.

But how do we take comfort in God in trying times? The question of suffering is a difficult one and I have no answers as to why God might intervene in some cases and not others but the fact that Jesus was born is a comfort that God is not distant or inactive; by the incarnation of Christ, God chose to suffer alongside His creation (and redeem it in the process).

God didn't promise days without pain, or laughter without sorrow but he did promise to be with us and the strength we derive from Him is a great comfort even in times of trouble.

I often think of Mary during Advent and wonder if she ever wanted to bundle up her child and flee, to protect her child and herself from whatever suffering lay ahead. However, she submitted completely to God's will for her despite what it cost (the shame and suspicion, and, as Simeon predicted, a sword to pierce her soul). She is a beautiful reminder to have faith even when the path isn't pretty or easy, and we can draw comfort from her example.

Clarity

A friend once gave me a book called "Finding your own North Star" in which the author, Martha Beck, drew a parallel between explorers relying on the North Star in its unaltering spot and people finding knowledge of their perfect life within themselves.

The book didn't hold much appeal for me but it did make me think of how people will look to so many different sources for guidance and inspiration, both within and outside of themselves, in a life not anchored in Christ.

In a world of clamour from so many sources, so many voices and myriad paths, Christ is the compass star and the measure who reveals God's voice to us.

To hear that voice requires listening and learning and waiting patiently for God to show the answer. It involves reading the Scriptures, not just as words on a page but with an open heart and a request to let the Spirit guide us through those words. It involves constantly bringing our minds back to the example of Christ, what he said and how he lived.

Christ has made God accessible and knowable to us, and in this beautiful and reflective time of Advent, amidst the many noises in our lives, may we find a place quiet enough to hear His voice.

AFTER CHURCH REFRESHMENT

Light refreshments will be served after the 11am service on Sunday 14th February and Sunday 28th February.





Cavehill Community Choir Concert

Thanks to the vision of the Social Team (Annette Beattie, Sandra Davison, Dora Hanna, Sandra Hutchman and Daphne McClements) the invitation to Cavehill Community Choir to perform in St Peter's resulted in a memorable evening for a number of reasons. It was a first for the choir as they sang their first full concert; there was a large number of visitors to St Peter's and it resulted in well over £1,000 being raised

for Church funds. We may have the Choir back sometime in the future so if you missed them this time watch *Parish Notes* for an announcement.

Our thanks go to the Social Team for a job well done.

Christmas at St Peter's

Thanks go to Colin Bell, Brian Callaghan, Wes Holmes, Brian Johnston, Quintin Mulligan, Ernie Stewart and Tony Swan for giving of their time and energy to decorate the Church for Christmastide and then take it all away in January.

You did such a good job—a date for your diary: Monday, 12th December, 2016 at 10am to do it all again. You can't possibly have something in your diary already!

Thank you very much.

Noel Beattie

Do you know about EASYFUNDRAISING?

If you shop online, you can use easyfundraising to raise funds for our parish.

Over 2,700 well known retailers (including Amazon, John Lewis, eBay and Tesco) will donate a small percentage of what you spend online to our parish to say thank you for shopping with them.

Let's say you wanted to buy a book from Amazon. Instead of going to www.amazon.co.uk directly, you first go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk. From the easyfundraising website, click through to Amazon to make your purchase. This tells Amazon you came from easyfundraising. The price of the book is exactly the same. It costs you absolutely nothing, and it can generate a lot of income for us.

Just visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stpjbelfast and follow the simple steps to sign up.

Ashlee McCune, Hon Treasurer

Church of Ireland Gazettes

For many years, Colin and Moya Bell have acted as our Gazette secretaries, faithfully collecting copies of the *Church of Ireland Gazette* every week from a local newsagent, naming them for the subscribers and leaving them on the table at the back of the church. At the end of December they retired from this role and Margie Crawford offered to take up the task starting in mid-March with Thelma Cross offering to cover the interim period. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Colin and Moya for their conscientiousness in this role and to Margie and Thelma for so willingly responding to our plea for a new volunteer.

AC

“All are from the dust, and all turn to dust again.”

Ecclesiastes 3:20



10th February

10.30am

Holy Communion

7.30pm

A Service for
Ash Wednesday

Northern Ireland Hospice

In preparation for the return of the Northern Ireland Hospice to Somerton House there are a number of roles available for volunteers. If you would like to help please contact the Volunteer Office at the Hospice, tel 9086 0989.

The roles are:

- Qualified Hairdressers—Monday—Friday, 2-3 hours per week
- Ward Clerk Volunteers—Monday—Friday, 9.30am—11.30am
- Laundry Volunteers—Monday—Sunday, 2-3 hours per week
- Dining/Kitchen Room Volunteers—Monday and Thursday, 10am—2pm
- In Patient Unit Care Volunteers (must have previous nursing or care home experience, competency based training to be provided) 3 hours per week—one shift per week.

ORGANISATIONS - TIMETABLE

Sunday

11am—12noon: Sunday School

Monday

8pm—11pm: Badminton Club

Tuesday

10.30am—12.30pm: Crafty Goodness

2.30pm—4.30pm: Ladies' Guild (2nd Tuesday in month)

6pm—7pm: Beaver Scouts

7pm—8pm: Cub Scouts

8pm—10pm: TCFNI Support for bereaved parents (3rd Tues in month)

Wednesday

2pm—4pm: Bridge Club

6.30pm—7.45pm: PhysioPilates

7.30pm—9pm: Choir

Thursday

10am—11.30am: 'Little Cherubs' Parent and Toddler Group

6pm—7pm: Rainbows

7pm—8pm: Brownies

7.30pm: Bible Study (2nd and 4th Thursday in month)

7.45pm: Historical Society (3rd Thursday in month)

8pm—9.30pm: Guides

Friday

10.30am—11.45am: PhysioPilates

11.30am: Bible Study (1st and 3rd Friday in month)

4.30pm—7.30pm: Speech and Drama

For more information on these organisations (including term dates) please contact the appropriate personnel listed on the back page or the Parish Office.

PARISHIONER CONTACT DETAILS

For speed of communication and to keep our records up to date please send your email address to Anne at stpeterandstjames@outlook.com. Also please don't forget to let us know if you move house, change your telephone number or change your email address. Thank you.

TRAIDCRAFT

Fighting poverty through trade



Stall open on
Sunday
14th February
during coffee time
after the
11am service

FEBRUARY FLOWER LIST

7TH ROSEMARY HINDS IN MEMORY OF HER MOTHER
14TH THE CROMIE FAMILY
21ST GWEN CAMPBELL IN MEMORY OF HER HUSBAND
28TH THE HALL FAMILY IN MEMORY OF THEIR MOTHER

Thank you to all who give of their time and effort
in beautifying the church with flowers.



PASTORAL CARE

If you would like to arrange for the Rector to visit you at home, whether to share your anxieties in confidence, for spiritual advice, for prayer, or for Holy Communion, then please contact him on his landline, telephone 90 777 053, or on his mobile, telephone 07563 531 082. This is an essential part of his ministry and he will be pleased to visit you and help in whatever way he can.

If the Rector is unavailable, there will be contact details for other clergy on the answer machine.

If you or a loved one is seriously ill, particularly if you are admitted to hospital, please inform the Rector. He often visits the hospitals but has no way of knowing who has been admitted unless he is informed.

If you are visited by a hospital chaplain and they ask if you would like your Rector to visit, please say "yes" and he will gladly come to see you.

THE NEXT MEETING OF
THE SELECT VESTRY
WILL BE ON
MONDAY 8TH FEBRUARY
AT 7.30PM
IN THE MINOR HALL

Holy Dusters Cleaning Rota

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| 1st February—6th February | Group 4 |
| 8th February—13th February | Group 5 |
| 15th February—20th February | Group 6 |
| 22nd February—27th February | Group 7 |
| 29th February—5th March | Group 8 |

Please send material for the March issue of Parish Notes to:

Anne Cromie, Parish Office, St Peter's Church,
Fortwilliam Drive, Belfast BT15 4EB

or email: stpeterandstjames@outlook.com

by Monday 22nd February. Thank you.