

THE PARISH OF ST PETER AND ST JAMES
BELFAST

PARISH NOTES

DECEMBER 2020/JANUARY 2021

Rector: The Rev'd Brian Lacey

St Peter's Rectory, 17 Waterloo Park South, Belfast, BT15 5HX



*Some of the children who attended the 10am All-Age Service
as we celebrated the Kingship of Christ.*

GOD . LOVING . PEOPLE

RECTOR'S NOTES

Merry Christmas!

There's no doubt about it—it's been a strange year. If we try to put a positive spin on it, we could say that it's certainly been memorable. For many people, however, it has also been difficult. Isolation, illness, bereavement, and financial difficulties have been to the fore in the lives of many, all around the world. There is simply no getting away from the negative impact that the Coronavirus has had.

However, with the joyful expectations of Christmas just around the corner, it is fitting that we end the year with hope. And I'm not even talking about the multiple vaccines for the virus which have been recently announced. I am, instead, talking about the joy of believing, trusting, and obeying our Lord Jesus. He is the light of the world, and even in the darkest times, his light shines upon us. Turn to him, therefore, for guidance and comfort, as we move from this strange year into what—we must hope and pray—will be a brighter future.

I am sure I'll see many of you in person in the weeks to come, but if not, have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Christ the King

Since the summer, we have had photos of parishioners on the cover of the Parish Notes. This month, we have four of the young children who attended our 10am All-Age Service on Sunday 22nd November. Our theme that day was The Kingship of Christ, and so our little parishioners are pictured wearing crowns to mark the occasion. Note also the image of Christ the King in the St James' reredos behind them. Elsewhere in these Parish Notes, David Cromie has written an article about that reredos. Please do read it, and learn a little more about the history of this beautiful artwork.

Coronavirus Lockdown

The Northern Ireland Executive has ordered the closure of places of worship from Friday 27th November until Friday 11th December, as part of their strategy to slow the spread of the Coronavirus. During those two weeks, St Peter's will not be open to the public, but services will be broadcast online through Facebook.

It is possible that a second Lockdown could be implemented in the New Year. For updates on whether or not the church will be open, please check our Facebook page, keep an eye out for emails from me, or contact either myself, the Churchwardens, or the Parish Office.

Services in December and January

There will be 11am services on all Sundays when St Peter's is open during the next two months. As usual, these will be broadcast on Facebook Live, with the exception perhaps of the two Sundays after Christmas.

In addition, there will be a 10am All-Age Service on Sundays 13th and 20th December. After a pause of a month, they will resume every Sunday from 24th January.

Our mid-week services at 10.30am on Wednesdays will continue each week as permitted. These will be broadcast live on most occasions. However, this is unlikely on the two Wednesdays immediately after Christmas.

Our service of Nine Lessons & Carols will be held on Monday 14th December. Under normal circumstances, St Peter's is often full to capacity for this service, but this year—owing to social distancing—we are limited as to how many people can be seated in the church. In order to accommodate as many people as possible, you will need to book a seat. To do so, please contact Anne Cromie in the Parish Office on tel 90 776 706 or email annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org. Seats will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. We will, of course, be broadcasting the service as well.

We will celebrate Holy Communion on Christmas Eve at 11pm, and again on Christmas Day at 10.30am. The Christmas Eve service will be in traditional language, with Christmas hymns. On Christmas morning there will be a modern language service, but this will be a much shorter service.

Christmas Tree

If you came to St Peter's on 22nd November, or if you watched the service online, it would have been hard to miss the beautiful Christmas tree at the front of the church. This was kindly provided and decorated by Robert Thompson, our Organist and Choir Master. We are very grateful to Robert for his kindness and effort in doing so. It's just a pity that for a couple of weeks of Lockdown it will only be seen via Facebook, but we can enjoy it at our remaining Advent and Christmas services when we return to in-person worship.



Choir

We are profoundly thankful to our Choir Master and five choristers who have provided an excellent choral depth to our Anglican liturgy since St Peter's re-opened to the public in mid-

July. Normally, the choir would have a break during July and August, so we are particularly grateful to them for foregoing their summer break. After Christmas, however, they will have some much-deserved time off for excellent behaviour!

But let's not forget those members of our choir who have not been singing in the choir stalls since the church re-opened. Social distancing rules limit the number of choristers to five, and that includes two people from the same household. If our chancel were much bigger, then I have no doubt that many other members of the choir would have loved to have returned. However, with news of a vaccine on the horizon, then—God willing—we will see numbers in the choir stalls increase during 2021. It will be wonderful to welcome them back.

Special Collection

Over the four year period from the beginning of 2016 to the end of 2019, the average running costs of our parish amounted to £122,169 each year. That works out at £2,349 each week, or £335 every day! That money pays for the clergy stipend, the upkeep of our buildings (St Peter's, the Rectory, and even St James), utility bills and council rates, our employees, and the general costs of worship, mission, and ministry.

As our Honorary Treasurer, Ashlee McCune, reminds us every year at our Easter Vestry Meeting, our income does not match our expenditure, and therefore we run a deficit each year, requiring us to eat further and further into our savings. Eventually—and it won't be too long—those savings will run out. In order to make up for that projected shortfall this year, we sent out Special Collection envelopes in the previous issue of the Parish Notes. We have also provided our bank details on Facebook for our supporters—both far and near—to make a donation online.

We are very grateful for the generosity of our members in contributing what they can to parish funds, in what is already a difficult year for many people.

If you have not already done so, and would like to make a contribution to this Special Collection, please enclose a cheque or cash in a sealed envelope, marked Special Collection, and deposit it in the collection box in St Peter's, or post a cheque to 17 Waterloo Park South, Belfast, BT15 5HX. Unless you wish your donation to be anonymous, please mark your name clearly on the envelope. Thank you so much for your ongoing support.

Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal



One of our Ministry Assistants, David Cromie, took on responsibility for organising this year's Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal. As he indicated in last month's Parish Notes, those shoeboxes will be heading off to children in Ukraine in time for Christmas. Thank you to everyone who responded to this appeal, and to David for coordinating it. In total, we assembled forty-three boxes and received £200 in cash to cover the cost of transport. (David is grateful and thrilled!).

Transforming Lives for Good

I am excited to announce that the Church of Ireland Board of Education has agreed to fund a new parish project during the year ahead. Transforming Lives for Good (known as TLG) is a Christian charity which provides primary-school age children with a coach for one hour a week, in order to help them through struggles they may be facing. Such struggles could be a result of issues such as bullying, bereavement, family breakdown, and poverty. In such cases, they may lack confidence, have no positive role models, or perhaps just need a friendly adult to talk to. If you think this might be something you would be interested in volunteering to do, with full training and support, then contact Laura at lauralacey@stpeterbelfast.org and she will provide you with more information.

Holidays

I hope to take two weeks' holiday from Christmas Day until Sunday 10th January. During that time, the Very Rev'd Brian Moller will cover the 11am services on Sundays, and David Cromie will officiate at Morning Prayer at 10.30am on Wednesdays.

In the event of a serious pastoral emergency, please ring the rectory landline on 90 777 053 and the answer machine message will give you the contact details of whoever is available for pastoral support. Please do not text or ring my mobile phone, as it will be switched off during those two weeks.

Remember the Self-Sacrifice of the Fallen

I haven't heard it said recently, but earlier in the year, the Coronavirus Pandemic was referred to—quite often—as a war. Boris Johnston has described it as such. Emmanuel Macron in France has done the same. As has Donald Trump, who—despite fluctuating between concern and ambivalence towards the Virus—has described himself as a “Wartime President.”

That sort of language is not limited to the speeches of world leaders. Think for example of how the Virus has been described as a “deadly enemy”, or how doctors and nurses have been described as “front line workers.” Such descriptions are the language of war.

The reason for such an analogy to be used in reference to the Coronavirus, is because Pandemics and Wars do have some similar social and economic consequences. Most obviously, and most terribly, a large number of people die. But there is also the threat of a deep recession in the global economy. And limits are placed upon our own personal freedoms for the common good of the nation.

But, with the exception of those workers—particularly in the health service—who have been most exposed to the Virus, given the nature of their jobs, the fighting talk that we heard from our leaders has been ironically pacifist. We have not been called up to go out and combat Covid-19. On the contrary, the most aggressive resistance we can muster, is to isolate ourselves at home. Because the best way to stop our deadly enemy in its tracks is—to do absolutely nothing. And moreover, to be proactive in doing nothing. Don’t get too close. Don’t leave your home. Don’t meet with others. A popular slogan was coined during the first wave of the Pandemic, which advised the youth of today: “Your grandparents were called to war. You’re being asked to sit on a couch. You can do this.”

Whilst, however, there are certain similarities between an epidemic and a war, I think we need to be careful not to push that analogy too far. Because the Pandemic which we are living through, has been bad enough on its own merits, it doesn’t require us to artificially inflate or exaggerate its effects by comparing it to something else that is bad, such as war. What we are facing is not a battle, but a disease. And we will eradicate it—not with bulldog spirit and a stiff upper lip—but with greater investment in healthcare, good hygiene practices, social distancing, and a vaccine. For the vast majority of people in this

country, therefore, we can avoid the disease if we—all of us—are sensible, cautious, and considerate of the welfare of others.

That of course, has not been the case for soldiers in our armed forces. Their enemies have not been mindless microscopic molecules that invade and attack by breathing contaminated air or touching contaminated surfaces.

For soldiers, their enemy has invariable been human beings. Other men and women, who had wilfully and purposefully sought to capture or kill them.

And on Remembrance Sunday, we did remember how those soldiers were killed, whilst standing up against our living, human, enemies, who would wish to capture, subjugate, and kill all of us. We remember and honour them for their bravery; for their defence of our nation and our way of life; for the sacrifices which they made defending us, which of course for so many, meant the loss of their own lives. But we also commemorate their loss, in order to never forget what led to their deaths. And that is the evil which has infected this world. Not physically, like the Coronavirus, but spiritually. Our Lord Jesus summarised such evil, by listing how it could be expressed: murder, adultery, immorality, theft, lies, and slander.

There are many other expressions of evil, but all of them place ourselves at the centre of the universe, and treat other people and their needs as afterthoughts, or irrelevances, or pawns to be manipulated, or obstacles to be removed, in the pursuit of our own desires.

Such evil is therefore inherently selfish, self-centred and self-absorbed.

We do well to remember that, as we go through life. Be aware of it, so that we can recognise it at work in ourselves in the attitudes we adopt, the decisions we make and the lifestyles we live. Such selfishness is the opposite of the attitude of self-sacrifice of the honoured dead, who gave their lives for our freedom. And in doing so, emulated the supreme sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us.

We must treat people as if they were Jesus

In Matthew 25: 40 Jesus said, “Just as you did it to the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Here we have our Lord Jesus associating with the poor, identifying with them, and inhabiting them.

Association, Identification, and Inhabitation. Let me explain what I mean.

Jesus associates himself with the poor of this world by calling them his “family.” They are the people that he wants to be with, to spend time with. Think about all the gospel stories, and consider who it was that Jesus gravitated towards over the course of his ministry. It was not the elite. It was not the ruling class. It was not the wealthy and powerful. He was not like the celebrity Christian leaders in today’s world, particularly from the Mega-Churches, who love to be seen meeting and greeting world leaders and movie stars. Our Lord Jesus had no interest in that.

Remember how he behaved when he was brought before both the High Priest, and Pontius Pilate, and King Herod. These three were the most powerful men in Palestine. And yet Jesus didn’t try to curry favour with them. He didn’t try to impress them.

In fact, quite the opposite. He was entirely unfazed by their earthly power; indeed, he put Pontius Pilate in his place telling him that “you would have no power over me, if it had not been given you from above,” and then when he met Herod, he angered him by not entertaining him with miracles.

And of course, we all know the price that Jesus paid for his lack of concern for the thoughts and feelings of the ruling class.

He was concerned about the poor, the vulnerable, the outcasts and the forgotten. He calls such people, his family. These are the people who he wants to be with.

But more than associating with them, he also identifies himself with them.

This is again different from the behaviour of many modern celebrities, who go out of their way to be seen to help the vulnerable—whether locally or around the world—and they make

sure that the journalists and the paparazzi are there to record them, and more importantly for them—to publicise what they have done. Often they do this either because they crave the attention, or because there is some financial incentive, or because they hope to get a knighthood out of it.

What Jesus is doing is different. What he's doing is a bit more like the good news stories that you sometimes hear about, in which someone from a working class background works hard, does very well for themselves, and then without any fuss or fanfare, they quietly invest in programmes in their hometown in order to improve the lives of the people there, and lift them out of the poverty that he or she once experienced in their youth.

This is the difference between someone who was born rich trying to help the poor people who live down the road, out of sight, and someone who was born poor but is now trying to help the people they grew up with and still feel connected to.

So Jesus' concern for the poor does not come from some benevolent attitude of having so much that he wants to ease his conscience by helping those less fortunate.

Rather, he himself is poor.

It is probably a strange thing for us to think about the Son of God as being poor, but the gospels implicitly and explicitly tell us this fact. Particularly relevant to Christmas, we are told that he was born in a stable. He was then raised as the son of a carpenter in a small town on the fringes of Jewish society. As an adult, Jesus described himself as "having nowhere to lay his head." Indeed, he and his disciples relied upon the good will of those who can afford to feed them, such as Mary and Martha. If anyone else were to live the lifestyle that Jesus had, as expressed in the Gospels, we would have no hesitation in describing them as "poor".

So, Jesus wasn't simply associating himself with poor people. He, himself, was poor.

But there's more to it, than even that. Our Lord Jesus actually inhabits the poor. Now, the word "inhabit" means "to live in". Jesus inhabits the poor. This is different, again, from Jesus simply

being someone who helped other people.

Because, let's never forget, that when we talk about Jesus, we are not talking about a do-gooder. We're not talking about a man who had some brilliant ideas about peace and good will to all men. We are, instead, talking about God himself. God who came to earth as a man. Remember the opening chapter of John's gospel: In the beginning was the word. The word was with God, and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him." "Him" being "Jesus". All things were made through Jesus.

He is the spark which differentiates life from lifelessness. Everything that breathes (everything that exists) does so because of him. It's as if our DNA is saturated with Jesus. His fingerprints are all over us. His own life enables us to live. So he lives within us. He inhabits us.

Now, when I said, "he inhabits the poor", that's not to say he does not inhabit the rich as well. He does; he is in everyone and everything. But the point of paying particular attention to how he inhabits the poor, the vulnerable, the outcasts, the forgotten, etc, is that we need to remember that Jesus is there within them, whenever we interact with them. That's why he explains that if you feed someone who is hungry, you are not just feeding that person, you are also feeding Jesus. And conversely, if you refuse to help, then you are not just refusing to help those in need, you are also refusing to help Jesus. He inhabits all of us. And therefore, how we treat others, is how we treat Jesus.

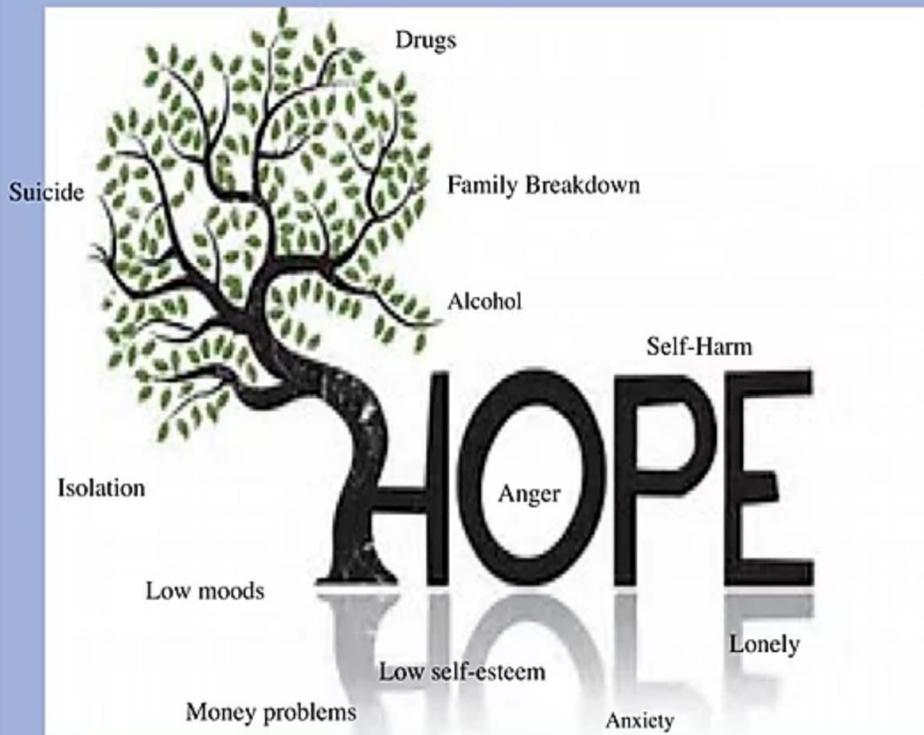
So, we must remember, therefore, both as individuals, and as a Church, that we must look at people, and interact with them, as if they were Jesus himself. What would we be willing to do for him, the Son of God, the maker of the universe if we saw him on the street? We must be willing to do the same for everyone in need.

Thank you to Margi Crawford for sending us a "Thought for the Month":

**It's not enough that we do our best,
sometimes we have to do what's required.** *Winston Churchill*

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email: hopecounselling1@hotmail.com

Origins and History of the Stephen Parker Memorial Trust

by Peter Gray

Stephen Parker was a student of the City of Belfast School of Music who played French Horn in the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra (CBYO) under the direction of Mr Leonard Pugh. Stephen was fourteen and a half years old when he became a victim of what has come to be known in the history of Northern Ireland as the Bloody Friday outrage on July 21st, 1972. He died as he endeavoured to warn others of the presence of an unexploded car bomb, an innocent victim of a terrorist outrage in a purely residential area of the City.

The Stephen Parker Memorial Trust was born out of this tragic situation. Knowing how much Stephen appreciated his place in the CBYO, his parents decided that his memorial had to be "capable of contributing in the long term towards the life and welfare of his beloved orchestra." A substantial sum of money donated at the time of Stephen's death was invested and has been further added to over the years. The Trust is administered by the Belfast Education and Library Board. Each year 75% of the annual income of this investment is awarded as a prize to "the member or members of the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra who make the best all round progress during the year." Students are then free to use this award to further their musical study through assisting with lessons or masterclasses or contributing towards the purchase of equipment. The residual amount is reinvested to maintain the value of the prize. The value of the prize itself has been £200 over the past few years.

If you would like to support The Stephen Parker Memorial Trust, then you may give cash, or write a cheque payable to "The Parish of St Peter and St James, Belfast", and bring it to church or to the parish office in an envelope marked "The Stephen Parker Memorial Trust". Thank you.

WHAT SUITS YOU BEST?

Please don't forget to let us know how you would like to receive your Parish Notes in future:

- ◆ *by email, or*
- ◆ *collect a copy from church, or*
- ◆ *have a copy delivered to your home.*

Please communicate your preference to Anne in the Parish Office:

email annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org
or tel 90 776 706

Thank you!

Free Will Offerings

As a result of the awful times in which we live, many parishioners have switched from using envelopes to other methods of giving. If you are expecting FWO envelopes for 2021 they should be included this issue of Parish Notes. If they are not, please contact me:

tel 90 778 428, or

email noelbeattie@stpeterbelfast.org

and I will arrange to have them delivered promptly. It's still not too late to change from envelopes to other means of giving: just get in touch with me! Thank you.

Noel Beattie

PARISHIONER CONTACT DETAILS

For speed of communication and to keep our records up to date please send your email address to the Parish Office at:

annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org

Also please don't forget to let us know if you move house, change your telephone number or change your email address.

Parish Notes On-line

There are full colour versions of Parish Notes on our website. Visit www.stpeters.connor.anglican.org and click on "News".

PARISH REGISTER

Christian Burial

"At rest in the Lord."

Lillah Hodges, Ben Madigan Care Home

Cremation at Roselawn

on 5th November 2020

David Gooding, Lisboyne Park

Cremation at Roselawn

on 26th November 2020

The St James' Chapel: Reredos, Holy Table and Reading Desks

by David Cromie

The St James' chapel in St Peter's church contains some of the splendid adornments of the former church of St James, and in particular the wonderful reredos. St James' church was consecrated on the 2nd March 1871, and served the lower Antrim Road until its de-consecration for use by the Church of Ireland a dozen years ago or so, following which it became a base for Orthodox worship. Originally built to serve a rapidly growing population, and blessed with more than a few well-to-do parishioners, little expense was spared in the design and construction of the church, and the internal fittings reached the same high standard. However, in the decades after the Second World War, population movement severely affected the parish and it was grouped with the neighbouring parish of St Peter's in 1996 and finally united under a single select vestry in 2007. Following the decision to close the church completely, the united select vestry decided to secure, by removal to St Peter's, some of the more significant portable items, including the brass lectern, Holy Table and two prayer desks. Then, in October 2018, work was put in hand to transfer the reredos (photograph overleaf) which was in imminent danger of being lost forever. This was not a simple matter, the reredos is a large and heavy structure and the possibility of having to cut it into two parts had, at one point, to be actively considered. However, under the watchful eye of the contractor, Mr Wallace Dunlop, the reredos was successfully moved in one piece, and now rests on the north side of the nave of St Peter's along with its accompanying Holy Table and prayer desks, as the centrepiece of the St James' chapel.

This was not the first time these items had been removed. On 15th April 1941, the original St James' church was largely destroyed by the Luftwaffe. The booklet, "A History of St James Church Belfast," describes the event: "The alert was sounded about 11pm. Shortly afterwards anti-aircraft guns opened fire and bombs began to drop. Two bombs exploded in the church, one in front of the pulpit and the other beside the font at the west end of the nave. Another bomb fell on the north east corner of the parochial hall, and a land mine at the opposite side of the Antrim Road completed the wreckage of the buildings." Only the tower, belfry and part of the chancel remained



more or less intact. The surviving furnishings, including the reredos, were removed to the parochial hall and first re-used on 13th July of that year. After the war, when St James' church was rebuilt, the furnishings were returned to the chancel and the restored church was consecrated on 11th September 1954.



The same booklet informs us that the prayer desks and Holy Table date from the early 1920s, but the reredos is from a decade later. It describes the reredos and its original location thus: “In the early 1930s the chancel had major renovations. The present reredos and panelling was installed by Heaton Butler & Payne¹ of London, and was presented by Mrs George Preston in memory of her husband. In the centre panel of the reredos is a figure of our Lord in majesty, holding an orb and sceptre, and crushing under his feet the serpent, the symbol of sin and evil. The other panels, from left to right, depict the four Archangels: Raphael, with fish and gourd, alluding to the story of Tobit; Michael with the flaming sword and balance; Gabriel, the angel of the Annunciation, bearing the lily, the emblem of purity; and Uriel, with the scroll and book, the reference to his teaching Esdras. The walls of the chancel were painted. At the Apex of the east wall was painted the dove, the emblem of the Holy Spirit, with emanating rays of glory. Below on either side, were adoring angels with golden harps. At the lower level, on either side of the east window were figures of St James (patron saint) with his brother, St John the evangelist. On the side walls of the chancel were the badges of St James—the shell and the gourd. The chancel was re-opened at the anniversary service on 2nd March 1933. ‘The pews, prayer desks, holy tables and screens were dedicated in 1920 and survived the bombing of 1941’.

Blessed already with a magnificent church building, St Peter’s is fortunate to have the St James’ chapel, with its superb reredos that glisters in the sunlight and truly enhances the building. It is a fitting memorial to the work and worship of the people of the former parish of St James, some of whom are members of the united parish, and thus still able to enjoy some of the beauty of earlier years.

¹ Heaton, Butler and Bayne was an English firm which produced stained glass from 1862 until 1943. Its studio was in Covent Garden, and it produced stained glass for churches throughout Britain and the Empire as well as the United States. Examples of its work were installed in Westminster Abbey, Wimborne Minster and Peterborough Cathedral.

*Please send material for the February issue of Parish Notes to:
Anne Cromie, Parish Administrator, St Peter’s Church,
Fortwilliam Drive, Belfast BT15 4EB
or email: annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org
by Monday 25th January. Thank you.*