

THE PARISH OF ST PETER AND ST JAMES  
BELFAST

# PARISH NOTES

SEPTEMBER 2021

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

*Peter Mulligan and the Rector  
polishing the church floor*

**GOD . LOVING . PEOPLE**

# RECTOR'S NOTES

## SERVICES IN SEPTEMBER

We will be resuming our 10am Sunday services from 12<sup>th</sup> September, using a different liturgy on each Sunday of the month, including a Family Service, Holy Communion, Morning Prayer, and a Healing Service. The service on 12<sup>th</sup> September will be a said service of Holy Communion, which includes a Eucharistic Prayer intended for use when children are present, so please do bring them with you! Each 10am service will last no more than thirty minutes.

Please note that our 6.30pm Sunday services will not resume until government restrictions have eased further.

We will celebrate the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September, and St Michael and All Angels on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> September, at our regular 10.30am services.

## CLEANING AND DECORATING

The summer months have given us the opportunity to do a bit of cleaning and decorating. Peter Mulligan and I waxed and polished the wooden floor of the central body of the church in late July (see front cover). The process involved cleaning the floor, applying clear beeswax polish with a mop, allowing it to soak into the wood overnight, and then burnishing it. It was quite straightforward, but it does make a big difference, particularly when the sunlight pours into the church. There are still areas around the perimeter of the building which need to be waxed, and we hope to complete this in the coming weeks. We

are grateful to the late Very Rev'd Brian Moller, who donated the burnishing machine to the parish just a few years ago. Our intention is to re-polish the floor every few years.

The halls were painted in early August, and it's great to see them looking refreshed. In the process, however, it became clear that we've accumulated a lot of junk over the years! At some point in the coming months, we will be gutting out the basement (below the main hall), and we will use that opportunity to clear away any unclaimed items from every nook and cranny.

Parishioners were down doing a clean of the church and halls, either coming in by themselves to do so, or as a team on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August. I was able to take a quick snap of Daphne McClements, as she set about clearing under the kitchen sink! Many thanks to all have helped keep our buildings and grounds clean and tidy.



## **EUROPEAN HERITAGE OPEN DAY**

St Peter's will be open to visitors on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September, from 10am until 4pm, as part of European Heritage Open Days. If you would like to volunteer to supervise the building for even an hour or two that day, then please let me know as soon as possible, or else sign up on the sheet at the back of the church.

For more information about the Open Days and the other historic buildings involved, you can view their brochure online at:

[fonts.tourismni.com/pdfs/European-Heritage-Open-Days-2021.pdf](https://fonts.tourismni.com/pdfs/European-Heritage-Open-Days-2021.pdf)

## **FOCUS ON THE FUTURE**

On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July, we celebrated the second of our two annual patronal festivals, commemorating St James the Apostle. The purpose of a patronal festival, which is a service of worship commemorating a parish and its patron saint, is intended to be a time of celebration, when we give thanks for efforts of previous generations of Christians, and we look forward with hopeful expectation towards what the future will bring. That's what we had done on St Peter's Day, just a month beforehand.

It's a little strange, however, to talk about celebrating St James—not the man, but the parish named in his honour. I mean, the parish church of St James has been closed for nearly fifteen years, its territory has been merged with St Peter's, and its money is being held in trust for use by the three remaining north Belfast congregations. Former members of St James have come here, or up the road to Holy Trinity, or have gone farther afield.

Although it is still remembered, the time will come when the

memory of worshipping in St James, and belonging to that community, will be gone. So, it's hard to know what exactly we're supposed to be celebrating on St James' Day. Would it be better to describe the patronal festival as a memorial service, remembering what once was, than a celebration?

Of course, as I have lamented many times in the past, St James' is not alone in having been closed as a place of worship. It is one of many churches in this area to suffer that fate. But rather than thinking about what has happened in the past, let's take stock of what's happening in this area in the present. In the north of the city, which the Church of Ireland reckons to be from St George's on High Street, out the Shankill Road and then all the land in between all the way to Belfast Zoo, there are about eleven Anglican churches: St George's, St Anne's, St Stephen's, St Michael's, St Matthews', St Mary's, St Mark's, St Andrew's, Holy Trinity, St Paul's, St Katharine's, and St Peter's. I've probably missed out one or two. But of those eleven that I've mentioned, only five have a permanent rector (such as myself). Three have a priest-in-charge, because they don't have the financial resources to afford a rector. And three currently don't have an ordained minister at all.

So, as a broad brushstroke, in the entire northern half of the city, half of the congregations are doing OK, a quarter are feeling the pressure, and a quarter are really struggling.

Until recently, the only option for the struggling parishes would have been to merge with a neighbouring parish, under the leadership of a shared rector. That would take a little bit of financial pressure off them, and perhaps the struggling parish might find itself comfortably staying afloat, or growing once again, or more likely, dwindling even further. When that happened, tough decisions needed to be made to close the church. And as I mentioned, that did happen quite a lot.

The process was, in many ways, designed to manage the natural decline. And it was a somewhat rational response to the reality of the situation: close the old church buildings in those parts of the city where Anglicans were no longer living, and instead build new ones out in the suburbs, such as the new housing estates in Newtownabbey, where they were moving to.

That policy of managing decline and responding to demographic shift, is based on the idea that the Church of Ireland church buildings should be where the Church of Ireland people live. But whilst that might seem like a sensible idea, it undermines the fact that a parish church and the parochial clergy, do not exist simply for the benefit of the people who worship in that church building. St Peter's, for example, is not a private club for longstanding members who have worshipped here all their lives. Our focus, as I have told you repeatedly, must always be on the people outside the building; the ones who don't come to worship with us; the ones who have not heard the Good News. Our church building, and our Christian community, exist to welcome strangers—those who were once far off—into the church family. And it doesn't matter if they were brought up as Anglicans, or Roman Catholics, or Methodists, or Presbyterians, or Free Presbyterians, or atheists, or whatever. We are here for them, and not for ourselves.

On that basis, it is better to put the church buildings in the middle of the mission field, where the Gospel must be proclaimed, rather than where there is simply a large number of Anglicans.

So even where parishes are struggling, closing them down should be the last resort. And we need to be positive, and forward thinking, when it comes to engaging in Mission, and seeking to revive and regrow the Church. And that might express itself in the activities that we undertake within the parish, which become more purposefully evangelistic, but you will also see us working more closely with our neighbouring parishes, sharing ideas and resources, as we seek—not merely to keep the church buildings

open—but to actually make disciples of Christ and enlarge the Kingdom of God.

We no longer want to memorialise the past, and reflect with sorrow over the former glory of long-gone congregations. For the best days of the Christian Church in this city are not over. They are yet to come. And I am excited for the part that we, here in this parish of St Peter and St James, will play in that revival. And I encourage you be enthusiastic for it, and more importantly—be involved.

## FWO ENVELOPES

With so many parishioners having decided to contribute to church funds using electronic means of payment, monthly standing orders, etc, instead of using FWO envelopes, it is now uneconomical for us to purchase the commercially prepared envelopes as the minimum order is 100 sets.

As a result, starting from 2022 we will be producing envelopes in-house for you to use, so, if by any chance you too are considering changing from using FWO envelopes to these other means of contribution, with effect from 1st January 2022, please would you let me know **as soon as possible** (tel 90778428 or email [noel\\_innisfayle@msn.com](mailto:noel_innisfayle@msn.com)).

If you wish to continue using FWO envelopes then there is no need to contact me and you will receive your envelopes in December as usual for the following year. Thank you for your attention to this. *Noel Beattie*

## Parish Notes On-line

There are full colour versions of Parish Notes on our website. Visit [www.stpeters.connor.anglican.org](http://www.stpeters.connor.anglican.org) and click “Parish Notes”.

*Please send material for the October issue of Parish Notes to:  
Anne Cromie, Parish Administrator, St Peter’s Church,  
Fortwilliam Drive, Belfast BT15 4EB  
or email: [annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org](mailto:annecromie@stpeterbelfast.org)  
by Monday 20th September. Thank you.*

## A Few Thoughts about our fellow Parishioner, Peter Gray

*by Wes Holmes*

I joined the Parish of St Peter in north Belfast in 1986. Peter was already a member then ... and one not easily forgettable: he was the quintessence of decency.

On a Sunday morning, in the Eighties, he stood before the altar with a group of young people prior to their being Confirmed as full members of the Church. Noteworthy about that small assembly was that he was the only adult, and I thought at the time that it required strong conviction to make a confession, unabashedly, along with a group of youngsters who were, perhaps, routinely, undertaking a rite of passage, whereas, for him, it was a thought-through commitment.

Thereafter, I saw him as a kind of weathervane. Despite the reservations of some about the Faith, among us was a wise and considerate man with a strong belief and this was both challenging and reassuring.

It was touching that he was one of the few in the Parish who, at the Benediction, would make the traditional sign of the cross with thumb on forehead and then, gently, on his breast, an ancient and Catholic submission which was not uncommon in the Church of Ireland of old.

His gentle decency and his acceptance of his lot was ever apparent. Despite his mental health issues—about which he was refreshingly frank—he was always uncomplaining.

His compassion for the oppressed via his charity work was demonstrated in his occasional pieces in our church magazine.

There are thoughtful, questioning, people in St Peter's and I was with some of them in a Charity Group, committed to helping vulnerable children in Eastern Europe. At one meeting there was an animated discussion about, what seemed, arguably, to be God's abandonment of those without hope. We debated endlessly but Peter was quiet throughout, then said simply, 'GOOD FRIDAY!' There are things beyond understanding. He was not an 'evangelical Christian' in the conservative sense, but one with depth, and his brief intervention brought us to thoughtfulness.

It's not altogether usual to mention a death at the beginning of the morning service, but at the Choral Eucharist on 1<sup>st</sup> August, before the service commenced, the Rector, Brian, announced that Peter had died. There were sighs and gasps. Everybody, everybody knew who was being referred to because Peter was invariably late, and it was hard not to notice him hastily trundling with creaking walking frame down the aisle. After the service there were, of course, words about him, and one of the churchwardens smiled as she told us that the last time Peter had spoken to her he'd said, 'Dora, the mask doesn't work if the nose is not covered'. Only few, like Peter, could correct without giving offence.

That walking frame and Peter's frailty of health. I would often see him making his way down to morning service, but even in heavy Belfast rain he would refuse



my offer of a lift, except, that is, when, sometimes, after Matins, he was going to visit his mother. Oh yes, then transport was welcomed for a speedier arrival. His love and admiration for his family was a great support to him. He took hard the recent deaths of his mother and his younger brother, John, but he remained full of faith despite all.

He will be dearly missed by many.

Requiescat in Pace.

## Pause for Thought and Prayer

Rosemary Johnston

### Climate Change: [Code: RED]

*'And God saw all that he had made and, behold, it was very good'.*

What must God be thinking today, as he views the beautiful planet he gave us to tend and care for and enjoy? The effects of climate change are experienced worldwide—soaring temperatures, floods, fires in tinder dry areas including Siberia—all on an unprecedented scale. When seen from space our planet looks beautiful, but up close the devastation is all too obvious. We were given a wonderful world, full of plants and animals to take care of. But we have done the opposite; mining for minerals; decimating vital rain forests to grow crops, eg, soya beans, and palm trees for oil; polluting the seas and over fishing, never mind the plastic which not only affects the fish but which may come full circle if that plastic becomes part of the food chain. Up until comparatively recently we were perhaps truly ignorant of the devastation caused by climate change, but now we cannot avoid the evidence. 'As new land is claimed each day nature is pushed out.' A quote from 'Earth from Space' on BBC2.

In this situation we must consider our young people who can see their future disappear before them due to these catastrophic events. Listen to them; they are so mature and knowledgeable. Perhaps they are the ones who will actually get things done. What a legacy we are leaving them—we and our ancestors created the mess and they are left to deal with it. Let us pray for our young people that the COP meeting in Glasgow brings about a positive outcome and that governments and businesses will act with the urgency required to make a real difference. Then perhaps God will look down at the Earth and say: 'Yes, it doesn't look too bad—but it was a near thing'.

# PARISH REGISTER

## *Christian Burial*

*"At rest in the Lord."*

*Peter Stanley Gray*

*Burial at Derwock Cemetery on 13th August 2021*

## *Holy Baptism*

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

*Lucas Kulton*

*son of Sam and Sarah, on 4th July 2021*

*Thomas Cornelius Kitson*

*son of Glen and Shakira, on 18th July 2021*

*Darcey Rose Farnbank*

*daughter of David and Sara, on 15th August 2021*





*Baby Thomas*



*Little Darcey*

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