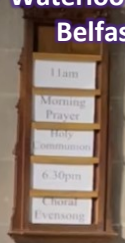


THE PARISH OF ST PETER AND ST JAMES
BELFAST

PARISH NOTES

MARCH 2022

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



*Our Honorary Treasurer (centre)
discussing the Annual Report with the
Rector and the People's Churchwarden.*

GOD . LOVING . PEOPLE

RECTOR'S NOTES

SERVICES IN MARCH

The beginning of March corresponds almost neatly (with the exception of just one day) with the beginning of the penitential season of Lent, which is a time of spiritual preparation in the run-up to Easter. It is a time when we are intended to focus on our sinfulness, and be reminded of the necessity of Christ's deaths for our sins.



On Ash Wednesday (2nd March), which is the first day in Lent, there will be a Penitential Service at 7.30pm. This is in addition to our usual mid-week celebration of Holy Communion at 10.30am that morning.

Our Family Service will be at 10am on Sunday 6th March. This will be followed at 11am by a Service of the Word, which will draw upon some of the prayers used at the Penitential Service on Ash Wednesday, and which will explore the meaning of Lent.

St Patrick's Day is Thursday 17th March, and there will be a celebration of Holy Communion that morning at 10.30am. Please note that there **will not** be a service on the Wednesday of that week..

The Fourth Sunday in Lent is always Mothering Sunday (and Mother's Day!), and this year it will be the 27th March. This is the day when—according to tradition—we should all worship in the church where we were baptised.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Following the relaxation of Covid-19 legislation, Bishop George has issued guidance on how the changes will effect parish activities. With regard to worship and parish organisations, I can summarise the guidance as follows:

We must not go to St Peter's for worship or activities if we feel unwell (particularly if we have symptoms of Covid-19).

We must sanitise our hands as we enter and exit St Peter's church and halls.

We must ensure that the church and halls are well ventilated when in use, which may mean leaving external doors or windows open.

We should maintain a comfortable distance from others when on church property, being mindful that some people may wish to continue keeping a one or two metre distance for the time being.

We should wear a face covering when walking around St Peter's church and halls, and when singing. Otherwise we may remove our face covering if we feel it is safe to do so.

We no longer need to keep a record of attendance for the purposes of track and trace.

It should be stressed that the relaxation of the rules does not mean that the Covid-19 Pandemic has come to an end. We are simply tip-toeing our way towards normality, but it could well be September (or later in the year) before we begin to notice things returning to how they were before March 2020.

Please continue to be mindful of the risk of transmitting the virus (particular in the next few weeks) and remember that different people will walk the path towards normality at different speeds. Please do not expect or demand anyone to be anything less than cautious if they feel vulnerable.

10AM SUNDAY SERVICES

The 10am Sunday Services continue to provide an alternative to our main act of worship at 11am. There is no music, and each service lasts for just over twenty minutes.

The first Sunday of the month is always a **Family Service**, which is designed with two aims in mind: To present a Scriptural message in a child-friendly way, and to enable children to experience a simplified form of Anglican worship.

The second Sunday of the month is a celebration of **Holy Communion**.

The remaining Sundays will usually either be **Morning Prayer**, or a **Healing Service**, or a **Scripture Service** (which includes teaching and discussion on the Bible reading), depending on what is appropriate for a particular month.

If for any reason you are unable to attend the 11am service, then please do consider coming to the 10am service instead. Although only the first Sunday of the month is intentionally aimed at children, they will be very welcome at any service.

EASTER VESTRY

Our Easter Vestry meeting will be held on Sunday 3rd April, immediately following a shortened service of worship at 11am.

Trying to understand the seemingly obscure terminology used by the Church of Ireland can often be difficult, but—like all things—it's easy when you know how. A General Vestry is the name given to a meeting open to all of the registered members of a parish. The word “general” implies “everyone”, although neither now nor

in the past could anyone simply turn up and participate. In former times only the ratepayers in a parish had the right to attend, but nowadays any adult who supports the parish financially and who has been registered may do so. Of course, having the right to do something doesn't necessarily mean that you will. Accordingly, only a handful of people usually turned up, and it was therefore possible to meet in the vestry—the usually small room in a church in which the ministers' vestments (robes) are kept. The name of the room where the meeting was held, thus became the name of the meeting itself.

Although a meeting of the General Vestry may be called at any time of year, the rules of the Church of Ireland stipulate that there must be a meeting within twenty days of Easter (either before or after, but excluding Holy Week). This meeting is often referred to as the Easter Vestry.

Easter Vestries have two main functions. First, it is an opportunity for those who support the parish financially to hear a report on how the money raised has been spent. Secondly, it elects (from amongst its own membership) fourteen members to serve on the Select Vestry—which manages the resources of the parish for the next twelve months.

Only Registered Members may participate (that is: speak, vote, and be nominated) at the Easter Vestry, but as the meeting will be held after a service of worship on a Sunday morning, all other members of the congregation are encouraged to stay and observe.

SELECT VESTRY

It is the duty and privilege of every Christian to support the Church financially as much as they are able. Managing that money is one of the responsibilities of the Select Vestry, and a

great deal of that burden is carried on the shoulders of our Honorary Treasurer, Ashlee McCune. This month, ahead of the Easter Vestry, the Select Vestry will be preparing our Annual Report (see front cover), and I am delighted that we have some exceptionally capable parishioners who have made this process straightforward. Could I ask you to please always remember your Select Vestry in your prayers, that we would manage our resources wisely, and with a focus on growing the Kingdom of God.

At the Easter Vestry meeting on Sunday 3rd April, in addition to hearing about parish finances, a new Select Vestry will be elected to serve until Easter next year. This committee meets once a month, and consists of seventeen members including myself and two appointees, and fourteen elected by and from the Registered Members. Every year, a few current members stand down in order to allow new members to take their place, and we are always keen to see willing volunteers coming on board.

The Select Vestry's purpose is to manage the human, physical, and financial resources of the parish. In other words, it manages our volunteers and employees, decides how to spend our money, and ensures the upkeep of our property. As the trustees of a registered charity, the members of the Select Vestry must individually and collectively ensure that everything we do is in line with state and church law. Note that the Select Vestry does not oversee the worship, mission, and ministries of the Church, although it is responsible for providing the resources needed.

It would be fantastic if two or three new names are nominated to the Select Vestry this year, but please do be aware that only Registered Members of the parish may be nominated, and some individuals may not—by law—become trustees of a charity. This includes anyone who (a) has an unspent conviction for an offence involving dishonesty or deception, (b) is currently declared

bankrupt (or subject to bankruptcy restrictions or an interim order), (c) has an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA) to pay off debts with creditors, (d) has made a composition or arrangement with, or granted a trust deed for, creditors and this has not been discharged, (e) is subject to a moratorium period under a debt relief order or a debt relief restrictions order, (f) is disqualified from being a company director, (g) has previously been removed as a trustee by the Commission or the High Court due to misconduct or mismanagement, or removed as a charity trustee by any other charity regulator or Court in the UK, or (h) is disqualified or barred from acting as a trustee of this charity under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012).

OUR HOPE IN THE WORLD TO COME

Hopefully, you will remember occasions in the past when I have explained to you that St Paul's Letters to the Corinthians were largely written in response to letters that he received from the Christians in the Greek city of Corinth. And you might recall me telling you that when you study what Paul has written, you need to read between the lines to discover what the Corinthians had written to him. In 1 Corinthians 15: 12–20, you don't need to do too much detective work. Because what the Corinthians had written to Paul, is stated quite plainly: "some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead."

Now, before we focus on what Paul says in response to that, let's think about the afterlife. We tend to think about life after death in a fairly simplistic way—along the lines of: A person dies, and their soul goes to heaven where they meet up with their loved ones who have already died. And you might imagine that heaven is simply a continuation of life on earth, or you might think of it

as a huge garden where you can relax and be at peace, or you might think of it as surrounding the throne of God, singing praises for all eternity. Of course, you might also say that such things are only for the good people, because the bad people will be spending their eternity being prodded with pitchforks whilst the smell of sulphur burns their nostrils.

One way or another, though, most people (it's fair to say) have some concept that they will continue to exist after their body dies. I've even heard several atheists expressing hope (at times of grief) that their deceased loved ones are "looking down on them". The idea is so prevalent nowadays, that it's surprising to think that, at the time of Jesus, when religion was much more ingrained in society than it is today, not all of the Jews believed in life after death. The majority probably did, but there was a large and influential group of Jews who didn't. And they were called the Sadducees. That should be a name that you've heard before, because it was one of two groups that are often mentioned in the Gospels who were opposed to the mission and ministry of Jesus: The Pharisees, and the Sadducees.

Generally speaking the Sadducees were the wealthier of the two groups, and although there were fewer of them, they held more power. That's important to note, because one of the main differences in belief between these two Jewish groups, was that the Sadducees did not believe in the afterlife, whereas the Pharisees did. And so to understand them, you need to adopt the mindset of someone who believes that there is a God, and that God will reward the good and punish the bad, but that such reward and punishment will happen during this lifetime instead of in the afterlife. On that basis, it's understandable that the Sadducees should have sought power and wealth in this world, because that was how they expected to be rewarded by God for their obedience to him.

I want you to bear all of that in mind, as we return to St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Now, the Church in the city of Corinth was comprised of two groups of people. There were the gentiles (non-Jews) who had believed in the pantheons of Roman or Greek gods and goddesses, but—likely through the missionary activity of St Paul himself—had converted to Christianity. The second group were Jews, who had come to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish Messiah. But within this group of Jews, you would have had individuals who perhaps identified with either the Pharisees or the Sadducees, or were simply influenced by what they believed. And clearly, this Sadducee notion that there was no life after death, had some standing in the Christian community at Corinth. That's not to say that everyone was swayed by this belief, as Paul states "some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead". But evidently there were enough of them to warrant Paul speaking out against them.

And his way of refuting that notion, is quite interesting. Because he doesn't offer evidence of life after death. That's different from St John, who, in his own letters, responds to a different argument (that Jesus was a spirit or apparition) by making the point that he—John—saw Jesus in the flesh. He not only knew him personally, but he could touch him. So he argued from his own experience that Jesus had been a real, physical, person. With St Paul, however, there is no personal evidence given to support his belief in the resurrection of the dead, and that's surprising because it would have been entirely appropriate to use his own experience of encountering the Risen Christ on the Road to Damascus, as his own proof (if even only for his own benefit) that Jesus had risen from the dead.

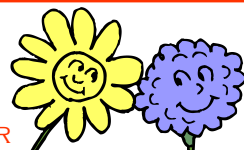
Instead, he makes this point: "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." In other words, *if there is no life beyond death, then what has it profited us to believe in Christ?* Now, why would he say that? Well, despite some people

in the Corinthian Church being quite wealthy, there were plenty who were poor. And more than that, they were persecuted. They were looked down upon. And such poverty and powerlessness and persecution begged the question: what exactly would they gain by believing in Jesus, if there is no afterlife? Indeed, if, as the Saducees believed, God rewarded the good in this life with wealth and power, then it would appear that for the majority of the converts to Christianity, who had neither, it would have felt more like God was punishing them, rather than rewarding them.

Paul's argument, therefore, is that there was very little to be hopeful for, if believing in Jesus had no benefit, and that instead real Christian hope was not based on what could be achieved in this world, but rather in the world to come. For Christians at the time, that was an important message, which would enable them to focus their attention not on the pains and difficulties of life as they knew it, but rather on a glorious future in the afterlife.

The same holds true for us today. There is absolutely no promise that being a Christian will fix all of our problems here on earth. We will still face poverty, sickness, death. Instead, the promise is life after death, and everlasting joy beyond our wildest imagination.

MARCH FLOWER LIST



13TH ANNE CROMIE IN MEMORY OF HER FATHER

20TH MARIE BURROWES IN MEMORY OF HER MOTHER

Thank you to all who give of their time and effort in beautifying the church with flowers. If practicable, flowers should be in keeping with the liturgical colour of the season, particularly during Advent and Lent.

SERVICES IN MARCH	OFFICIANT	LECTOR	PREACHER	INTERCESSOR
WEDNESDAY 2 nd MARCH—ASH WEDNESDAY—LENT (PURPLE)				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Rector	Rosemary Johnston
7.30pm Penitential Service	Rector	David Cromie	David Cromie	Rector
SUNDAY 6 th MARCH—THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT—LENT (PURPLE)				
10am Family Service	Rector	Rector	Rector	Rector
11am Service of the Word	David Cromie	David Cromie	Graham Chipperfield	David Cromie
WEDNESDAY 9 th MARCH—LENT (PURPLE)				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Rector	Colin Bell
SUNDAY 13 th MARCH—THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT—LENT (PURPLE)				
10am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Rector	Daphne McClements
11am Morning Prayer	David Cromie	David Cromie	Rector	David Cromie
THURSDAY 17 th MARCH—SAINT PATRICK'S DAY (GREEN)				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Rector	Jill Bradley
SUNDAY 20 th MARCH—THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT—LENT (PURPLE)				
10am Scripture Service	Rector	Rector	Rector	Rector
11am Holy Communion	Rector	Daphne McClements	Rector	Rosemary Johnston
WEDNESDAY 23 rd MARCH—LENT (PURPLE)				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Rector	Dora Hanna
SUNDAY 27 th MARCH—MOTHERING SUNDAY—LENT (PURPLE)				
10am Morning Prayer	David Cromie	David Cromie	David Cromie	David Cromie
11am Morning Prayer	Rector	Dora Hanna	Rector	Ashlee McCune
WEDNESDAY 30 th MARCH—LENT (PURPLE)				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Rector	Rector	Daphne McClements

Another Ulster Fry

David Cromie



The men of St Peter's and St James' were at it again on Saturday, 29th January. Not even a biting chill and a hint of stormy weather to come could deflect our gallant heroes from a fry-up. We had the same core group as previously plus a few new ones and minus a couple who

were unable to come, so a similar number to last time. I didn't forget anything on this occasion (phew) and there was little left over apart from a few eggs which Samuel cooked in an over enthusiastic assumption of what the party could eat and the rector, bless him, ensured there were no sausages left over!

As head cook, I joined the conversation rather late in the day, but happily considered the over-working of architects, the cost of a new gear-box and the potential collapse of the dollar amongst other things whilst pronging the last few mushrooms.

These may be the simplest of events, but they are great fun and open to all the men of the parish, of whatever age. On the day, we welcomed our youngest diner to date, who made swift work of a sausage, thus proving that the only qualification necessary is the ability to handle a fork.

We had considered bringing in a speaker, but such is the hubbub, I am not sure that is essential at all. This is a group enjoying its own company and we'll go again, probably in April or May.



CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Presented to
St Peter's Parish Church

Thank you for your donation of 40
filled shoeboxes and £180.00.

Blythwood Ireland wants to
recognise your fantastic support
and your valuable contribution to
the 2021 Appeal.



Thank you for helping us make
a real difference in the lives of
so many people!

Date: *January 2022*

Charity number: NIC 104515

Christian care for body and soul

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT AND PRAYER

by Rosemary Johnston

Lent: Ponderings and Ramblings

The season of Lent is now upon us; six weeks to think about our faith journey; six weeks to ponder over our own lives and how we might think more deeply about the life of Jesus and how our lives reflect his. So, where do we start? What about me? Well, Jesus was without sin so I think I need to examine my own conscience, acknowledge where I have gone wrong and seek God's forgiveness. But Lent is more than that. I need to think more honestly about how truly repentant I am. If my repentance is not genuine can I really expect God's forgiveness? It is so easy to say 'sorry' but I must mean it. I need to ask for God's help to turn away from my wrongdoings and failures and listen more carefully to the teachings of Jesus. I need to reflect on the things I ought to have done and on the things I ought not to have done.

The Rev'd Ernie Rea, broadcaster and former head of religious broadcasting in the BBC was interviewed in the Belfast Telegraph by Alf McCreary, who asked him—"What about regrets? Have you any major ones?" Rev'd Ernie's answer was—"When I was head of religious broadcasting, I was summoned to a meeting in London on the day of a friend's funeral in Wales. I went to the meeting, but it was the wrong call. I find that I don't regret the things that I did; I regret the things that I didn't do."

What should I do during Lent? I need to be more disciplined in prayer and reading and worship; I am none of these. The hymn "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" should put me on the right track, but I fall so far from God's grace at times and wonder how he can care about me. However, I take comfort from reading about Jacob in Rich Castro's book on Malachi—"We discover that Jacob was a deceiver, schemer, thief, liar and coward. He could not be trusted and he did not trust God. He had no moral fibre and no sense of responsibility—at least not before the end of (Genesis) chapter 32. And yet, equally, God chose Jacob and loved him."

So, with better discipline and guidance for us all from the rector, I will face the season of Lent in a more positive frame of mind.

"Thank you Lord for knowing me better than I know myself, and for letting me know myself better than others know me. Make me I ask you then, better than they suppose, and forgive me for what they do not know." Abu Bakr

Is life getting you down? Would you like someone to talk to?

At HOPE Counselling we are:

Here to help **Open** to listen **Provide** confidentiality **Encourage** you

Come and talk in a safe, confidential and supportive environment.

For further information or to make a referral please get in touch:

Tel: 07902 523883

Email: hopecounselling1@hotmail.com

FLOWERS IN CHURCH

Don't forget the Flower List for 2022 is now open for bookings and we would ask that all usual contributors contact the Parish Office (90 776 706) to book a Sunday for the coming year. Of course, as there are always some Sundays left available, new people may wish to come forward and donate flowers, perhaps to mark a particular occasion or anniversary for them. It may be a wedding anniversary, the birth of a child or grandchild, to remember the death of a family member, or indeed as an act of thanksgiving for some notable blessing. All such donors are acknowledged in the Parish Notes.



We very much appreciate all who contribute flowers Sunday by Sunday and also all those who devote so much time and energy in arranging them and looking after them mid-week.

Parish Notes On-line

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

*Please send material for the April 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 21st March. Thank you.*

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