

**THE PARISH OF ST PETER & ST JAMES
BELFAST**

PARISH NOTES

APRIL 2026

Rector:

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



***The Rector and Robert Long at the
National Churches Trust Conference.***

GOD . LOVING . PEOPLE

PARISH CONTACTS

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Walking Group: Jill Bradley	Tel: 028 9084 2998 Email: jill.bradley1@btinternet.com

Parish Notes On-line

The Parish Notes

can be read on our website.

Visit: www.stpeterbelfast.org

RECTOR'S NOTES



WORSHIP IN HOLY WEEK AND APRIL

Please make every effort to join us in St Peter's for worship on Easter Day at 10.30am.

The month of April begins in the middle of Holy Week, so let me outline what's happening in St Peter's throughout that week.

- Palm Sunday (29th March): Service of the Word at 10.30am
- Fig Monday (30th March): The Way of the Cross at 7.30pm
- Holy Tuesday (31st March): Compline at 7.30pm
- Spy Wednesday (1st April): Healing Service at 7.30pm
- Maundy Thursday (2nd April): Choral Eucharist at 7.30pm
- Good Friday (3rd April): Tenebrae at 7.30pm

On Sunday 5th April, which is **Easter Day**, there will be a choral celebration of Holy Communion at 10.30am. This is one of the Church's three Principal Holy Days, and it would be wonderful if every member of our Christian community made a special effort to worship in St Peter's.

On Sunday 12th April, which is the **Second Sunday of Easter**, there will be a service of Morning Prayer at 10.30am. This will be led by our Ministry Apprentice, Robert Long, as part of his training as a Diocesan Lay Reader.

On Sunday 19th April, which is the **Third Sunday of Easter**, there will be a Service of the Word at 10.30am, after which will be our annual Easter Vestry Meeting. The service itself will be just over thirty minutes long, and I'll try to keep the business parts of the meeting as straightforward as possible. There's more information about the Easter Vestry elsewhere in these Parish Notes.

On Sunday 26th April, which is the **Fourth Sunday of Easter**, there will be a choral celebration of Holy Communion at 10.30am.

Throughout the month, there will be mid-week services on **Wednesdays** at 10.30am. The exception is Wednesday 1st April, when there will be no morning service. There will instead be a service in the evening at 7.30pm.

EASTER VESTRY

Our annual Easter Vestry Meeting will be held in St Peter's on Sunday 19th April, immediately following our morning service. Following a summary from our Honorary Treasurer, Ashlee McCune, on the parish finances in 2025, you will elect an Independent Examiner, a Churchwarden, a Glebewarden, up to twelve other members of the Select Vestry, four Parochial Nominators, four supplemental Parochial Nominators, three Diocesan Synodspersons, and three supplemental Diocesan Synodspersons.

Although anyone is permitted to be in the church during the meeting, only Registered Members may participate in the elections. That is, they may nominate someone for election, or they themselves may be nominated, and they may cast a vote if there is an election. I generally try to avoid elections wherever possible, as they can sometimes be divisive and are certainly disappointing to those unelected. If more individuals are nominated than we need for any position, then I will try to resolve this through consensus or voluntary withdrawal. However, if it comes down to it, and we need to cast votes, then we will do so as efficiently as we can.

In case you wish to know what the various positions do in practice, here's a run-down:

The two **Churchwardens** are responsible for ensuring that the church is open and ready, and that everyone has what they need to worship, and that everything is turned off and locked up afterwards.

The two **Glebewardens** are technically responsible for helping me ensure that the rectory is kept in good condition, but more generally they oversee maintenance of the church and halls as well.

The **Select Vestry**, which consists of myself, the Churchwardens, the Glebewardens, and up to twelve others, is responsible for managing the human, physical, and financial resources of the parish. It does not, however, have any role to play in the worship, mission, and ministries of the Church, except to ensure that there is enough money to make these things happen. As its first item of business, the newly elected Select Vestry appoints an Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.

The **Diocesan Synod** is an annual meeting of the clergy and representative lay members from each parish in the Diocese of Connor. This year it will meet on Thursday 25th June in Dunluce Parish. The Synod then elects members to the General Synod and to various diocesan committees. You can elect three representatives to the Diocesan Synod, of whom one must be under 35 years old.

In the event that a new rector needs to be appointed for the parish, the **Parochial Nominators** help determine who that might be. They don't make that decision alone, however, but join with representatives from the diocese on what's called a Board of Nomination. You must elect four Parochial Nominators, who for the sake of equality, should consist of two men and two women.

GUEST PREACHER

We were delighted to welcome Maxine Judge to St Peter's as our guest preacher on Sunday 15th February. Maxine is a Diocesan Lay Reader, whose home parish is St John's, Malone, but who often leads services in Finaghy. In recent years, Maxine provided Sunday cover during the vacancy in Holy Trinity, and many of the former members of that congregation (see photo inset) were able to rekindle their friendship in St Peter's over coffee.



RECTOR'S HOLIDAY

Following our Easter Day service, I will be on holiday until Wednesday 15th April. During that time, please contact the Rev'd Andrew Irwin in the event of a serious pastoral emergency. For general pastoral support, please contact Robert Long, our Ministry Apprentice. Their contact details are elsewhere in these Parish Notes.

PAROCHIAL ACTIVITIES

Simply because of Easter, there will be no Discipleship Group, no Bereavement Group, and no Prayer Group during April.

Our **Bible Fellowship** will meet on Thursday 23rd April at 7.30pm, during which we will continue our study of the Gospel according to Luke.

Our **Bible Study Group** will meet on Wednesday 29th April at 11.30am, at which we will learn about the Book of Daniel.

HOUSE GROUPS

I mentioned recently in church that I have been meeting with a few parishioners over the last six or seven months to explore how to run a “house group”. These are sometimes called “growth groups” or “cell groups”. In some Christian denominations they are almost mandatory for members of a congregation, whereas in others they are largely unheard of.

Although the precise nature and purpose of such a group will change from one context to another, there are some fundamental similarities: Five or six people commit to meeting with each other at least once a month in one of their homes,

to discuss some aspect of the Christian faith and how it applies to their lives, and to pray with each other.

Within that basic framework, there can be a lot of variation. Some groups may choose to meet more regularly than once a month; some will meet in one designated person's house, whilst others might rotate amongst each member's home; some will find their own resources to use, and some might ask me to prepare something for them to think about; some groups will have a time of silent or open prayer, whilst some will use pre-written prayers.

Regardless of how each group operates, the purpose is to encourage new friendships to be formed, old friendships to be strengthened, and for each member to grow in their faith. If belonging to such a group is something that interests you, then please speak to me as soon as possible. I will be trying to form at least two groups in the coming months, but I would be delighted if some of you voluntarily chose to form a house group yourselves. Come and speak to me and we will take the next steps.

NATIONAL CHURCHES TRUST

On Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th March, the National Churches Trust held a Northern Ireland Places of Worship Conference at the MAC in Belfast, launching the first cross-denominational survey of church buildings in Northern Ireland. The event brought together denominations, funders, and heritage bodies to examine hard data on building condition, maintenance backlogs, community use, and financial sustainability. Monday's focus was on presenting the survey findings and outlining the key pressures facing

churches across the region, whilst on Tuesday there were practical workshops on maintenance, tourism, fundraising and legacy giving. I attended the conference alongside Robert Long (see front cover) to learn more about maintaining and developing our beautiful and historical church building.

ARE YOU BORN AGAIN?

Any of you who travel on the road from Bangor to Belfast will undoubtedly have seen a verse from the Bible printed in huge letters on the side of a barn that you pass by: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (*John 3: 16*)

Why do you think that the person who owns that barn, picked that particular verse to put on display? Well, it’s often used as a very concise way of articulating the Good News: Believe in Jesus, and you will be saved, because God loves you.

Understandably, it’s a very important verse for evangelists and missionaries, who are trying to reach people in order to save their souls. Of course, the wider passage which surrounds that one verse, is also often quoted. And it’s from it that we get the also very familiar verse: “Ye must be born again”. Some translations say something slightly different: “You must be born from above.”

In the Greek language in which this was originally written, the words for “again” and “from above” are the same, so when we translate the passage into English, you can choose to use either of those words. But regardless of which you choose, the meaning of the passage stays the same: Each of us must undergo some form of spiritual renewal.

The problem is that some Christian evangelists and missionaries limit that spiritual renewal to a single moment.

Let me explain what I mean by that: Let's imagine that a non-Christian met a Christian evangelist. And in the course of their conversation, the non-Christian became convinced that they would like to become a Christian. And what would happen in most cases like this, is that the evangelist would get the person to say a prayer along the lines of "Lord Jesus, I know I have sinned and need your forgiveness. I believe you died for me and rose again. I turn from my sins and invite you into my heart as my Lord and Saviour."

Now, there is nothing fundamentally wrong with that prayer. In fact, it's the sort of prayer that every person (even lifelong Christians) should pray every morning before they get out of bed. The issue is that when many evangelists hear someone say that prayer, they score another tally mark on their count sheet recording how many people they have saved. "One more person came to faith, praise God." And it's as if salvation began and ended with that prayer. As if, because they said the prayer, they are now officially born again. They believe in Jesus, and therefore they have eternal life.

Now, hear me when I say this: I am not rejecting any of that. I am not saying that those evangelists are wrong. What I am saying, is that the moment a person commits their life to Christ (by, for example, saying the sinner's prayer) is only the tip of the iceberg of being born again, and it is not the most important part of being a Christian. I mean, we were all born from our mother's womb, but the life you have led since then, is much more important than simply the fact you were born. And it's the same with the rebirth that Jesus is talking about.

Being born again is the beginning, but the Christian life you live after that, is more important.

People who don't understand that, can fall into the trap of thinking we are saved by saying the sinner's prayer, and nothing else matters. And the problem there is that in congregations around the world, you will find some horrible, nasty individuals who have no problem being horrible and nasty because they can pinpoint the exact moment in their lives when they said the sinner's prayer. Now, of course not everyone who says the sinner's prayer is nasty and horrible. That's not what I'm saying. I'm talking instead about certain individuals who think that because they have ticked the box and gone through the motions of "being born again" then that's all that's required of them, and that they continue being exactly as they were beforehand, except now they can tell everyone that they are "saved".

That is now how Christianity works. And although we use fancy theological jargon such as "salvation" and "sanctification" and "atonement" and "redemption" and "being saved" and "being born again", really what Jesus is offering us is a transformation of our hearts and our minds, which flows from being in relationship with him.

And that transformation will take time. And that relationship will have its highs and its lows, its joys and its challenges, like any other. But we tend not to focus on that when proclaiming the Good News because it's messy and it's uncomfortable and it's difficult. And so instead we oversimplify Christianity by saying, "Just pray this prayer and you'll get into heaven."

That may well be the very first step for a lot of people, but there is lifelong journey of being a Christian, which follows on

from that. The Christian faith begins by saying “yes” to God, but it is not limited to, or defined by that one moment in our life. It continues with every choice we make, with every act of love, with every decision to trust God when times are tough. That’s what it means to be born again: to have a new life that comes not from what we decide in a moment, but from how God transforms us through the rest of our life.

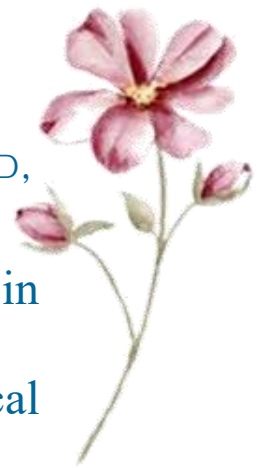
APRIL FLOWER LIST

5TH EASTER DAY

19TH KATHRYN HENNESSY IN MEMORY OF HER HUSBAND,
HUGH, AND SISTER-IN-LAW, GRETTA

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

If practical, flowers should be in keeping with the liturgical season, particularly during Advent and Lent.



Come
along
and bring
your
friends!

Our Church Family

Please let us know
about any happy
events or exciting
news within our
parish family. Good
news is always
worth sharing.

AFTER CHURCH REFRESHMENTS

Thank you to all who provide light refreshments after services—it is much appreciated.

If you would like to help sometimes, please contact Sandra Hutchman (contact details on inside cover).



Notes from the console

by Robert Thompson

Dearest gentle reader (isn't that how these occasional columns should begin?),

I ... and the choir ... would like to let you all know how much we value your support and encouragement Sunday by Sunday. It's always lovely when folk say they enjoyed the anthem or organ music ... it's absolutely not why we do what we do but we are only human after all. A perfect manifestation of this support has been the growing attendance at our monthly Choral Evensong on the second Sunday of most months. Some of us, who like me have been around St Peter's for many years, will remember days when attendance consisted of the Rector, Churchwardens and Colonel and Mrs Filor at the very back of the nave ... we've come a long way since then! So if you haven't yet been to Choral Evensong I would encourage you to try it ... the music and liturgy are lovely and the craic afterwards over Sherry and Shortbread is a chance to mingle and chat. The next Choral Evensong is on the second Sunday in May.

Over the Holy Week and Easter period the choir is always very busy and there's a lot of great music every year. This year there will be something a bit different on Good Friday. At the evening service of Tenebrae, instead of individual pieces of music related to the readings, there will be a complete “performance” (not the right word but you know what I mean) of the Fauré *Requiem*. The individual movements will be used as our reflection on the unfolding story of the Passion of our Lord as the Bible passages are read and the church descends into darkness. The soloists will be our own Judith Cowan and Rory Douglas Smith. We will also be joined at the organ by the wonderful Tristan Russcher. This is something we haven't done before and I hope it will help add intensity to this very moving service which is one of my favourites in the liturgical year.

Prayer

If you would like your name added to our prayer list, please get in touch with Rosemary Johnston, tel 028 90 840 534, or go to www.stpeterbelfast.org/prayer and fill out the form.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

to those with birthdays in April:

Kathryn Hennessy, Clodagh Webb, Rebecca Delaney
Ashlee McCune, Alex Delaney, Patricia Houston, Dora Hanna,
Joyce Hunter, Jim Knowles, Pamela McCamley, Jim Wilson.

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

*If you would like to add your name to our birthday board, you'll find it on the notice board at the back of the church, alternatively, you can ask Anne, our Parish Administrator, to add it for you.
No years mentioned!*

North Belfast Historical Society

Thursday 16th April at 7.30pm

Speaker: Colin Stark

Subject: Playing in the Ulster Orchestra

Our annual subscription is £20.

Non-member £5 to attend a meeting. Everyone welcome.

We look forward to seeing you.

Daphne McClements (Chairperson)



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 any of your telephone numbers, or your email addresses. Thank you.



Si vis pacem, para bellum?

by David Cromie

This quotation from the Roman writer Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus means 'if you wish for peace, prepare for war'. It sounds much better in Latin (and might fool you into thinking I am a fluent Latin speaker) and is the accepted philosophical theory undergirding the present drive for re-armament in Europe.

Four years ago, I wrote a short article in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. We are now into the fifth year of that war and in spite of the wish of so many for a cessation of the violence, we seem to be slipping into a weary acceptance that it will just go on and on, until exhaustion, collapse or some exogenous factor stops it. Remember our first reaction to the invasion, when the church was filled with piles of blankets, food and clothing, and we rushed to send money for the care of refugees? Today, it scarcely rates a mention and the Oscars and Middle Eastern wars fill our screens instead. The killing goes on in Ukraine, but we worry more about the immediacy

of rising petrol and home heating oil prices, while economists and politicians fret about debt, inflation and where the money will come from to rebuild our armed forces.

When Jesus told his disciples (and us) that the poor are always with us, he was recognising a truism – it is not just that there will always be people who have little money, it is that human society will always produce pyramids of power and wealth and will resort to wars if necessary to determine who will be the winners and who the losers. This is the inheritance of Adam, and we are his heirs. However, we are also the heirs of Christ and people of faith. Rosemary Johnston, in her article in this magazine, reminds us that Saint James said faith without action is worthless, but what should we do in a world increasingly obsessed with war? Jesus said we should beat our swords into ploughshares; but if we did that, where would we be if Mr Putin and his army came calling?

We might admire the stoic resolution of conscientious objectors, but what would have happened if everyone in the UK been such in 1914 or 1939? However, and just for a moment, broaden the conjecture: what would have happened had all Europeans been conscientious objectors on those

same dates? War and preparations for war are not a new normal, they are the old normal we forgot about after the Cold War. For us, life was not 'nasty, brutish and short', but it was so for Afghans, Iraqis, Ukrainians and all too many in Africa.

Back to Renatus' dictum. He was not arguing for military preparations because he liked armies, but to promote peace. 'Si vis pacem, para bellum' may be the paradoxical siren song of every arms manufacturer, but it also contains a truth. All countries, whether they seek peaceful neutrality or not, have to recognise that they exist in a troubled world and should expect war (hot, cold or asymmetric) at any time, and therefore must prepare to defend their people against it. But whilst the seeking of peace ought always to be the ultimate objective of every nation, for us as individual Christians, it is a non-negotiable imperative and a foundation stone of our faith.

Jesus said, "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God". If we take this message to heart and truly seek practical ways to act as peacemakers, especially as our nation re-arms in threatening times, then we might also be called children of God.



PAUSE FOR THOUGHT AND PRAYER

by Rosemary Johnston

“There was no other ...”

As we move on through Lent towards Calvary and the cross it is hard to imagine how Jesus felt as his death came ever nearer. He knew there was no other way to save mankind but he was human as well as divine and the kind of death he was to endure cannot have been easy to contemplate. On the night before he died Jesus asked his disciples to wait with him in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, but they fell asleep and he must have felt very alone - would any of us have done any better? I'm sure I wouldn't. In Holy Week we are able to remember his suffering and death when we attend any of the services and we have the chance to spiritually walk with him on his last journey. We can have no idea what death on a cross was like for the sufferer; huge nails hammered through the hands and feet causing pain beyond imagining – we know how painful just a small cut can be. Then the weight of the body can make it difficult to breathe. Yet Jesus suffered all this for us. We are told in Luke, chapter 23, that the sky darkened, the Temple

curtain was torn in two and that the centurion ‘seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” Jesus committed his spirit into his Father’s hands and breathed his last. It must have had a profound effect on all who were there. We are then told that Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus’ body and laid it in a new tomb cut in the rock.

Easter Day dawns, a day of joy and celebration of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. But how ought I to respond to this priceless gift which Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, has given us? It is not enough for me to say “Thank you, Lord Jesus”, and go on my merry way with my life.

It is not enough for me to come to church on Sundays, attend other services and meetings and go home and get on with my own interests the rest of the week, without a thought about what Jesus wants of me. As St James said, “Faith without actions is dead”.

*Heavenly Father:
Help us to live the life Jesus wants us to live
and to seek the guidance
of the Holy Spirit to that end. Amen.*



ZUMBA

Want to shake up your workout routine? Try Zumba! Inspired by Latin American dance, Zumba classes are a fun way to combine exercise and dance. With high-tempo routines these sessions are a great way to work up a sweat and boost your fitness. Gill, a registered instructor, is going to run three classes at St Peter’s on Saturday mornings 10-11am on 11th, 18th and 25th April.

HELLO



If you're new to St Peter's and would like more information about our parish, or if you would like to register as a member, please contact the parish office.

If you would like to support the worship, mission, and ministries of St Peter's, your donations may be deposited in the box at the back of the church. If you have donations that you would like collected from your home, please call the parish office and we will gladly arrange this for you. We are also happy to provide information if you would like to donate by standing order.

Other ways to donate are by Apple Pay, Google Pay, PayPal or by credit/debit card, please scan this QR code on your phone.

If you need more free will offering envelopes, please contact the parish office and we will be happy to print a set for you.



Please come along to church on Saturday 4th April from 10am to help decorate the church for Easter. Further information, if required, from Sandra Davison.

ALTAR GUILD ROTA FOR APRIL

Date	Time	Set-up	Wine Cruet	Wine Chalice	Colour	Location
Thursday 2nd	7.30pm	Dora Hanna	Dora Hanna	David Cromie	Red	Chancel
Sunday 5th	10.30am	David Cromie	David Cromie	Dora Hanna	White	Chancel
Wednesday 15th	10.30am	Rosemary Johnston	Margaret McK Black	Robert Long	White	Resurrection
Wednesday 22nd	10.30am	Jim Wilson	Rosemary Johnston	Robert Long	White	St James
Sunday 26th	10.30am	Kathryn Hennessy	Dora Hanna	Lucas Todd	White	Chancel

SERVICE SCHEDULE FOR APRIL

SERVICE	OFFICIANT	LECTOR	PREACHER	INTERCESSOR
Spy Wednesday 1st April (Red)				
7.30pm Healing Service	Kate Crothers	-	Rector	Kate Crothers*
Maundy Thursday 2nd April (Red)				
7.30pm Choral Eucharist (1662)	Rector	David Cromie	Rector	David Cromie*
GOOD FRIDAY 3rd April				
7.30pm Tenebrae	Rector	-	-	Rector*
Sunday 5th April - EASTER DAY (White)				
10.30am Choral Eucharist	Rector	Sandra Hutchman	Rector	TBC
Wednesday 8th April (White)				
10.30am Morning Prayer	Dora Hanna	Jim Wilson	Dora Hanna*	Rosemary Johnston
Sunday 12th April – The Second Sunday of Easter (White)				
10.30am Morning Prayer	Robert Long	Nigel Macauley	Robert Long	Dora Hanna
Wednesday 15th April (White)				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Margaret McK Black	Rector	Daphne McClements
Sunday 19th April – The Third Sunday of Easter (White)				
10.30am Vestry Service	Rector	-	Rector	Rector*
Wednesday 22nd April (White)				
10.30am Holy Communion	Rector	Stella Taggart	Rector	Jim Wilson
Sunday 26th April – The Fourth Sunday of Easter (White)				
10.30am Choral Matins	Rector	Philip Williamson	Rector	Ashlee McCune
Wednesday 29th April (White)				
10.30am Holy Communion (1662)	Rector	Dora Hanna	-	Robert Long*

TIMETABLE

Sunday

10.30am: Sunday Service and Sunday School

Monday

10.30am: Walking Group

6pm: Glandore Dog Training Club

7.30pm: Select Vestry (4th Monday in month)

Tuesday

10.30am: Crafty Goodness

7.30pm: Priory Singers

Wednesday

10.30am: Holy Communion

11.30am: Bible Study (last Wednesday in month)

12noon: Bereavement Group (2nd Wednesday in month)

12noon: Prayer Group (3rd Wednesday in month)

2pm: Bridge Club

5pm: Unislim

6.30pm: PhysioPilates

7.30pm: Choir Practice

Thursday

10.30am: Chair PhysioPilates

6pm: Rainbows

7pm: Brownies

7.30pm: Discipleship Group (1st Thursday in month)

7.30pm: Bible Fellowship (2nd & 4th Thursdays in month)

7.30pm: Historical Society (3rd Thursday in month)

8pm: Guides and Senior Guides

Friday

10.30am: PhysioPilates

4pm: Speech and Drama

For more information please contact the appropriate personnel listed on the front pages.

Do you have a food allergy?

When refreshments are being served at church, if you have a food allergy or a special dietary requirement, please inform a member of the hospitality team.

HOLIDAYS

The Parish Office will be closed during the week beginning 6th April and the week beginning 27th April.

If your business would like to advertise in our Parish Notes please contact the Parish Administrator, Anne Cromie.

BREW BY THE CAVE

Mount Lennox, 683 Antrim Road

We serve expertly brewed coffee, delicious homemade soups, freshly baked scones, and much more, in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Our café is the perfect spot to soak up the scenery or stop in before exploring Cavehill. We are nestled in nature, offering stunning garden views and a peaceful escape. Come by and see why we're a local favourite.



Tues 9-3, Wed-Fri 9-4 & Sat-Sun 10-3

Please send material for the May 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 20th April.

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