

the Connection

Easter 2016



Mass Times

St Nicholas' Church, Carrickfergus
Vigil Mass Saturday 6:00pm, Sunday 11:30am
Tuesday and Thursday 10:00am

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Whitehead
Sunday 9:30am
Monday and Wednesday 10:00am

Confessions

Carrickfergus: Saturday 5:30pm to 5:50pm
Whitehead: Sunday morning before Mass

Eucharistic Adoration

Carrickfergus: Saturday 10:00am to 5:00pm
Whitehead: Monday and Wednesday 10:30am to 10:45am

Baptisms

Carrickfergus: 3rd Saturday in the month
Whitehead: 1st Saturday in the month
One month's notice is required.

Weddings

By arrangement. Three month's notice is required



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Easter Message



It is my happy duty to introduce this second edition of "The Connection", our recently established parish newsletter, and once again to thank the Communications Committee for all their industry and dedication.

If I had to choose one word to describe the Parish of Carrickfergus and Whitehead as I have found it during my first eighteen months as Parish Priest, it would be the word "dynamic". Sometimes a parish can become tired and lifeless, a place where little happens and where what does happen is dull and uninspiring. Nothing could be

further from the truth in our parish, both in the spiritual/liturgical and the apostolic/social spheres - this is a faith community that is active, vital, engaged and welcoming. I gladly pay tribute to the many parishioners whose spirit of generous service energises our parish, both in Carrickfergus and in Whitehead.

All of this is excitingly and skilfully reflected in this second edition of our newsletter, which is a joyful evocation of the day-to-day life of the parish. In particular I applaud the fact that due recognition is accorded to all those parishioners whose service is behind-the-scenes and who can easily be taken for granted.

Of course no parish exists in isolation and this truth is brought home to us here in Carrickfergus and Whitehead by our membership of the Loughshore Pastoral Area.

Another aspect of how our parish is "connected" is our enthusiastic collaboration with the Carrickfergus Church Forum. What a great personal pleasure it was for me to be joined at Mount Saint Nicholas by some of the Protestant ministers from the town for the Forum event "Celebrating Streams of Life" - it was an outstanding experience of Christian fraternity.

We find ourselves in these days at the very heart of the story of Jesus of Nazareth and our story too: Crucifixion and Resurrection, suffering and rebirth. The cover of this second edition of "The Connection" conveys powerfully the glory of God made visible in the crucified and risen Jesus and in a world made new in Him.

A blessed and joyful Easter to all parishioners and to all our visitors.

P. J. Owens, P.P.

the
Connection



Following in the footsteps of Jesus during Lent 2016



Each Monday evening during Lent, Parish Cells facilitated a time of reflection on the Stations of the Cross.

The evenings alternated between St Nicholas' Church in Carrickfergus and Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Whitehead. Our hope for this Lenten initiative was that we might experience a deeper understanding of Jesus' suffering and death as we walked along the road to Calvary with Him.

The Stations of the Cross is an ancient devotion which has been prayed throughout the ages. Tradition holds that Mary, Jesus' mother, visited daily the scenes of Jesus' passion. When Christianity was legalized in 312, this pathway was marked with its important stations. St Jerome (342-420), wrote about the crowds of pilgrims

from various countries who travelled to the Holy Land to follow the Way of the Cross. This devotion continued to grow and in the fifth century, an interest developed in the Church to "reproduce" the stations in other places, so that those people who could not actually travel to the Holy Land could follow the Way of the Cross. In 1742, Pope Benedict XIV urged all priests to enrich their churches with the Way of the Cross.

Our time of observing the Stations of the Cross lasted approximately forty minutes. St Nicholas' Folk Choir lead our music and the Stations of the Cross were prayed by a different member of Parish Cells each week. After the Stations, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for a short time, a thought provoking reflection was read and that was followed by a further few minutes of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The evening ended with light refreshments which were served by our newly formed Social and Hospitality Group.

Many of those who attended voiced their appreciation at being able to spend time praying the Stations and having time with the Blessed Sacrament.

Written by Margaret Webb

Platinum Wedding Anniversary

On 25th February, George and Maureen Holmes celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. The couple met some 73 years ago when Maureen came to work in Mrs Leith's cafe in Whitehead where George would go for a cup of tea. They were married in Our Lady of Lourdes Church by the Reverend Father Hurston, and then went back to George's mother's house who, having saved up her rations, treated the wedding party to an Ulster fry to celebrate. The happy couple then went on honeymoon to Dublin for a week.

70th



The couple are well known and much loved in not only the Parish, but the Whitehead community at large. They marked their platinum anniversary with a family celebration, and received many flowers, gifts and cards from well wishers near and far, including HRH Queen Elizabeth!

Please let the Communications Committee know if you have any stories or events that you would like to share in our next edition of The Connection by emailing communication@carrickparish.org.

St Nicholas' Primary School

The children and staff at St Nicholas' have enjoyed a very busy winter term. The first week of February 2016 was Catholic Schools Week which this year focused on the 'Year of Mercy' proclaimed by Pope Francis. Our teachers used this opportunity to explore with the children how they can be the face of God's mercy in our classrooms, the playground, our school, our families and our community. During this week we also had a special assembly for Grandparent's Day to celebrate the important contribution grandparents make to the children's lives.

On 28th February 2016 our wonderful choir did a fantastic job of representing the school at the Peace Proms in the SSE Odyssey Arena. Peace Proms allows children to sing to family and friends accompanied by the Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland. It is one of Ireland's largest cross community arts initiatives and involves 20,000 primary school age children North and South of the border every year. Thanks go to Miss Deborah Gallagher for leading the choir and helping them prepare for this exciting event. The children sang absolutely beautifully and really enjoyed the superstar experience of the arena.



As part of our ongoing commitment at St Nicholas' to working with other schools in our community, we recently applied to take part in the Shared Education programme. Our application has been accepted and our partner schools are Sunnylands and Model Primary Schools. Primary 2 and Primary 5 have been selected as the initial contacts for the project. The programme will involve a range of activities within each school and our staff and children are very much looking forward to taking part.

On 1st March 2016, 26 of our Primary 3 pupils celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation alongside 8 children from Acorn Integrated Primary School. The children were prepared for their first confession by Fr Peter and their teacher Mrs Leanne Carrabine, learning about the importance of acknowledging when we do wrong, seeking forgiveness and forgiving others. They performed the drama sketches and poetry readings they had prepared wonderfully and were a real credit to their parents and families.



World Book Day was 3rd March 2016 and the children and staff marked the occasion by dressing up as characters from their favourite books and participating in shared reading classes, with our Key Stage 2 children helping out by 'buddy reading' in Foundation and Key Stage 1.

It is a great tradition within St Nicholas' Primary School to help those less fortunate than ourselves. Throughout the Lenten period the children have been taking part in a whole host of fund-raising activities for Trocaire. These have included Crazy Hair Day (Mr Austin's favourite), Funky Sock Day, Pyjama Day, and No Homework Day, as well as a penalty shoot-out competition, and bun, popcorn and ice lolly sales. The children have been learning about how climate change has impacted on families in the poorest parts of the world and how we can all act to fight for justice for these communities.



Finally, we are delighted to say Congratulations to St Nicholas' on their recent ICT Accreditation, which recognises the excellent standard of ICT work embedded throughout the curriculum.

Parish Baptisms

The last 6 months have seen a baby boom in the parish with 18 children being baptised in Carrickfergus and Whitehead, compared to 24 during the whole of the previous year. These are just a few of the children who have been welcomed into the parish in recent months:



Conan Peter Harkin was baptised on 21st November 2015 at St Nicholas' in Carrickfergus. Parents Eamonn and Claire-Louise were joined by family, friends and proud older siblings Aoife, Caden and Phearse to celebrate their special day.



Shay Callum O'Mahony was baptised at St Nicholas' on 16th January 2016. Parents Kerry and Seamus were delighted to celebrate this special occasion with family and friends who travelled to join them from Whitehead, Derry, Birmingham and Manchester.

Aaron Daniel Kelly was baptised at Our Lady of Lourdes in Whitehead on 6th February 2016. Parents Sarah-Jane and Seamus celebrated with family, friends and older brother Ethan.



Natalia Klaudia Andrzejewska was baptised in Carrickfergus on 20th February 2016. Parents Rafal and Dominika were joined in celebrating the baptism of their daughter by family and friends who travelled all the way from Gdańsk and Łębork in Poland.



Ronan Patrick Haveron was baptised on 5th March 2016 at Our Lady of Lourdes. Parents Mairead and Brian shared their special day with family, friends and affectionate older sisters Cara and Maria.

Baptisms take place on the first Saturday of the month in Whitehead and the third Saturday of the month in Carrickfergus. To make arrangements for a baptism please contact **Natalie** at the Church Office on 028 9336 3269.

He Who Sings Well Prays Twice

According to some, St. Augustine of Hippo (+430) is often quoted as having said "He who sings, prays twice." The Latin cited for this is "Qui bene cantat bis orat" and within the Parish of Carrickfergus and Whitehead, the three choirs sing well.

So what is the purpose of a choir? Since Vatican II, the Church has worked to build up the Ministry of Music by encouraging congregational singing. Choirs are there to enhance the liturgy, and here in our parish we have a wealth of talent, experience and people willing to give their time to do just that – lead us all in singing.

Of course there are different styles of music, and each choir has its own unique approach. Plus, in my opinion, we need to work to the best of our abilities. So as parishioners we have a choice: the beauty of the traditional music as provided by the Saturday Singers aka the "Senior Choir"; the simplicity of the organ with the wonderful Whitehead choir; or the Sunday morning "Folk Group" – I prefer the term "Contemporary Choir".

Since the ancient times of the Psalms - the song book of the Old Testament - to the modern music derived from the Down & Connor Folk Group, these songs, both personal and corporate, give voice to our faith and make it possible for many lips to speak together in praise - through melody, rhythm, and rhyme.

Since I was asked to be Director of Music two years ago, I have had the privilege of working with the Folk Group and it amazes me how committed the choir is in leading the music. I have also been gratified by the interest shown by our youngsters who have come and joined us – significantly lowering our average age! And this latter point I feel is so important because with our youth lies the future.

Unfortunately that does mean that they move on – although in well over 30 years, many of the original folk group are still there – Martin, Helena and Roisin to name but three. But this year Gráinne White – our incredibly talented violinist/harpist/pianist and singer – is moving away for 6th form to take up a well-deserved scholarship at Wells Cathedral School.

But we still have Kerry, Tara and Olivia and more are welcome – instrumentalists or singers. I really would like some drums, so any percussionists out there?

Jesus is called the Word made flesh in the Gospel of John. We might extend that just a bit to say that Jesus is the ultimate song of God, the ultimate love song. We love singing and playing but that is because we are praying.

Good luck Gráinne

Since the age of 6, Gráinne White has shown an aptitude for the violin. She is now 16, which means that she has spent the last 10 years fine tuning her technique in relation to playing this instrument. Throughout these ten years, she has taken part in a number of festivals, led several orchestras and ensembles, and toured with different groups such as NYOGB Inspire and The City of Belfast Youth Orchestra. Of course she has also been a valued member of our Folk Group.

This year, Gráinne applied to Wells Cathedral School in Somerset, England. In November, she went to audition for a place in the school, and on Christmas Eve she received an email from the Director of Music at Wells to congratulate her and to say that they would like to offer her a place in the school. On top of this, they stated that they would like to offer her a music scholarship for the two years that she would be attending the school. Wells Cathedral School is one of five specialist music schools in the UK.

The icing on the cake for Gráinne came on 19th March when she was voted Northern Ireland's Young Musician of the Year for 2016.

Congratulations Gráinne. Your parish family is very proud of you!

Written by Anne Hayes



Recognizing our Church Cleaners



This edition of The Connection would like to pay tribute to a great team of people who largely work behind the scenes in a quietly unassuming way - our volunteer church cleaners.

Our parish has two beautiful churches which are kept in pristine condition by a wonderful group of people. They selflessly give of their time and energy to ensure that both of our churches in Whitehead and Carrickfergus are spotlessly clean. The service provided is their gift to the parish, and we would like to acknowledge that gift, and say a very warm and appreciative thank you.

The Carrickfergus team includes



Catherine Brock, Maureen Butler, Fiona Haighton, Ann Harrison, David Hillen, Calum Hillen, Jean Maxwell, Therese Robinson, Anne-Marie Smith and **Jayne Logan, Siobhan Gilmore with Elaine Hillen (pictured left).**

The Whitehead team includes



Catriona Austin, Claire Bagshaw, Helen, Brian & Gerard Carson, Julie Feenan, Marie Gerring, Mary Glenn, Gerry Herdman, Pamela Maginn, Mary Maxwell, Jennifer McGowan, Marion & Hugh McHugh, Christine McKenna, Kathleen McKenna, Maureen McLaughlin, Sally McMurtry, Kathleen Slaughter, Helen Teague, Eileen & Barry Vance, Sylvia Woods and **Ann Woods, Mary McCormack with Gerardine Stewart (pictured right).**



P S C

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN,
YOUNG PEOPLE &
VULNERABLE ADULTS

Parish Safeguarding - Promoting Safe Behaviour Online

In our parish, we are committed to implementing safeguarding practices through compliance with statutory and diocesan policies and procedures. The Parish Safeguarding Committee (PSC) develops and promotes 'best practice' and supports parish volunteers in **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE and VULNERABLE ADULTS.**

The members of our Parish Safeguarding Committee are: Amanda Stewart (Chairperson), Sarah Dixon (Secretary), Cathy Brock, Diane Law, Tony Feenan, Trea Allsop and Father Peter Owens who is also the Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding for the Diocese of Down and Connor.

This year, the PSC received a presentation from CITRAH on advice for parents on promoting safe behaviour online. The general advice to parents is:

- The most important thing is to talk to your children about the benefits and dangers of the internet so that they know how to use the internet safely.
- Take an interest in their online activities - their favourite websites, online games and keep an eye on what they are doing online.
- Don't be afraid to ask your children who they are talking to online and what they are talking about, and remind them how important it is to tell a trusted adult if something happens online that makes them feel uncomfortable or worried because there are people who can help.
- Become a net-savvy parent - the best safeguard against online dangers is being informed.

For useful advice for parents, children and young people on how to stay safe online go to **www.getsafeonline.org** or for information on parish safeguarding speak to a Member of the Safeguarding Committee.

What's going on in Woodburn Forest?

In late 2015 Pope Francis released his heartfelt Encyclical on climate change, which addresses the climate crisis and so much more. In it, he speaks to us directly: "As stewards of Gods creation we are called on to make the earth a beautiful garden for the human family. When we destroy our forests, ravage our soil and pollute our seas and rivers, we betray that noble calling""the fragile environment is defenceless before the interest of a deified market, which becomes the only rule."

These global concerns have recently become local due to events taking place in Woodburn Forest, just north of Carrickfergus. Public land, which is part of NI Water, has been leased to a private company for the purpose of exploratory drilling for oil and gas. The drill site is 380 metres above North Woodburn Reservoir, within the water catchment area. This reservoir supplies the drinking water for thousands of people from Whitehead, Carrickfergus, and Belfast. Pure, clean drinking water is a resource that we take for granted, and it is too precious to be put at risk.



Local people are very concerned about the outcomes of this project, and have been maintaining a presence near the site. People have come together to support each other, from all backgrounds, and age groups, getting involved in their own way to change something that they feel is so wrong.



“When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society.”

On Mothers Day, families were invited to “Walk in the Wood” which was a lovely event enjoyed by many grandparents, mums, dads, children and dogs, skirting the puddles, jumping ditches, finding frogspawn, appreciating nature at its best. Unfortunately, this will no longer be possible, as fencing has now been erected to facilitate works access.

This issue is part of an unfolding local and global story in which any of us can play a part, however small.

“Let us be protectors of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”
Pope Francis.

Written by Aisling Cowan

Year of Mercy Evening



Year of Mercy Discussion Evening with Father Timothy Bartlett

The Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis commenced on 8th December 2015. During his sermon at Sunday Mass that weekend, Fr Tim Bartlett told us that the Pope has “asked the Church in this Jubilee Year to rediscover the richness encompassed by the Spiritual and Corporal works of Mercy” and he reminded us briefly what these works are. There was such a positive response to this sermon that the PPC invited Fr Tim to deliver a more detailed talk on the topic. This took place at the start of Lent on Monday 15th February in our Parish Hall in Carrickfergus.

Fr Tim started the evening by giving a brief background to the Jubilee Year of Mercy, informing us that Pope Francis’ own calling to the priesthood came as a 16 year old boy when he went to confession on the feast of St Matthew, the great convert. He explained the imagery used in the logo for the year, which made many of us look upon it with fresh eyes and with a greater appreciation of it.



He went on to concentrate on the Corporal Works of Mercy and specifically how we can put these into action. For example:

FEED THE HUNGRY - Fr Tim reminded us of the shocking statistics of childhood poverty in Northern Ireland and spoke of the great works that the St Vincent de Paul Society does. He encouraged us to contribute to the Society, either financially or with our time, to help them support those on our doorstep struggling with poverty.

COMFORT THE AFFLICTED – We were reminded of the positive impact of simply spending time and offering support to a friend or a neighbour who is going through a difficult time.

GIVE TO THOSE WHO THIRST – Fr Tim reminded us of how fortunate we are to have instant access to clean water and not to forget those less fortunate than ourselves. This could be through supporting charities such as Trocaire – particularly in their Lenten campaign. We were also reminded of our responsibility to use this valuable resource wisely.



Fr Tim spoke on the other four Corporal Works of Mercy before concluding his talk with a fitting quote from Mother Teresa, which sparked ideas and questions on what we as a Parish collective can do during the Year of Mercy.

“Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you.”

At the end of the evening, we committed to coming back together as a parish family to discuss specific ways of responding to Pope Francis’ calling. The Parish Pastoral Council will shortly announce a date for this follow-up discussion evening.

Easter Chicks



After Fr Tim's presentation about the Year of Mercy, Eileen Vance had the idea of adapting a parish project that started almost 10 years ago. Back then, chicks were knitted by women of the parish to give to the primary school children. Eileen's recent idea was to tie in with the Corporal Acts of Mercy, and for parishioners to come together to knit chicks, which Fr Peter would then distribute to the sick and the housebound.

The patterns for the chicks were made available at Mass and there was a social evening organised. People had the choice to make the chicks in the comfort of their own homes, or to come together to knit and complete the chicks, as well as to share materials, ideas and a chat over a cup of tea.

The response was fantastic, so many thanks to all who got involved.

Pictured with Fr Peter is Mary Carton who kindly drives him to visit the sick and housebound in Carrickfergus. Brian Carson performs this same kind act with Fr Peter in Whitehead. Mary's and Brian's kindness, as well as their knowledge of the parish, has been invaluable to Fr Peter in his ministry to our housebound parishioners.

Celebrating Streams of Life



On 9th February 2016 St Nicholas' hosted an event organised by the Carrickfergus Church Forum to celebrate the life and calling of our local clergy. This event focused on the older established churches in the town centre and involved local historian Philip Orr interviewing our own Fr Peter, Rev. George Davison from St Nicholas' Church of Ireland, Rev. Cecil Grant from First Carrick Presbyterian and Rev. David Clements from Carrickfergus Methodist Church.



All four speakers were asked about their early background, their first encounters with the Christian faith and church, their calling and path to ministry, their core beliefs, main influences that have shaped them, and how they view the wider church and community they seek to reach.

Those present very much appreciated the openness and honesty with which the speakers discussed their experiences and shared their personal stories. It was a great opportunity to hear and appreciate our local clergy – the things they share in common and also their diversity of faith.

The Church Forum organisers were delighted with an attendance of around 80 people from a range of churches in the town including a good representation from St Nicholas' Church of Ireland.

The Forum which was formed by local people in 2008 with the support of Carrickfergus Borough Council Good Relations aims to:

- Openly and actively promote respect for diversity of faith, culture and tradition.
- Bring people together and encouraging co-operation, mutual understanding and an ability to live and work together.
- Promote healing and reconciliation in the community.



More information about the Church Forum and up-coming events can be found on their web page at www.carrickferguschurchforum.org

IT TRIES TO DO THIS BY:

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment for interactive encounters, including dialogue, discussion and small group activity where all can share their experience of life as it relates to their sense of identity, faith, culture and tradition.
- Organising talks, workshops and visits that promote understanding and address issues relevant to church and community.
- Encouraging co-operation between Churches, Christian organisations, their members and leaders, supporting existing activities and taking new initiatives.
- Working in collaboration with local agencies and community groups in the search for practical ways in which Christian values and the Gospel of Jesus can serve to encourage and build up the community.

Why Study Theology?

It started with a Bible



About 20 years ago I was on a weekend visit to Knock Shrine in Co. Mayo. While browsing one of the many shops I came across a Christian Community Bible. It had indents for each book of the Bible which meant it was easy to find different Gospels etc. I purchased it and with great interest began reading. It had explanatory notes at the bottom of each page which made the Scripture passages easier to understand. Soon after we moved to Carrickfergus Parish I was asked by a few people if I would be interested in joining a Parish Cell prayer group and eventually I did. It was such a surprise to find other people interested in reading Scripture and sharing their thoughts.

I became so interested in Scripture over the next few years that I enrolled in an adult faith education course called Pathways, at Drumalis Retreat House, Larne. I continued studying at Drumalis and completed two more courses, one in Christian thought and another in Theological studies. This led me to begin studying a Degree in Theology at the Dominican Theological College in Tallaght, Dublin. What a fantastic journey it has been. People have asked me several times, "What has it done for you and what have you learnt".

The study of Theology is described as being the study of God. However, for me, it has been much more than that. I have discovered where my faith has come from, I understand the Christian faith better and have a greater knowledge of its earliest beginnings, how it has developed, and how it has managed to stay alive despite what the modern world has thrown at it as we enter the third Millennium. I have become enlightened in my faith from an adult's perspective and have lost the childlike attitude I was taught about God, Jesus, the Spirit, faith and Church. There's no doubt that my faith in God has been strengthened tenfold.

During my studies I attended quite a number of Sabbath days in the Synagogue in Belfast. I was welcomed and taught how to read the order of service and allowed to enter into the festive celebrations after each service. I ate their food and drank the celebratory Kiddush wine. Once, at a celebratory meal, a man left the table. He folded his napkin and placed it in a certain position with his cutlery, glass and plate. I asked the man sitting beside me what this gesture meant. He told me that it was a very old tradition dating back to the days of Moses and means that the man will be returning to his place at the table.

When I heard this I was astounded because I immediately thought of the Resurrection story in John's Gospel. When Peter entered into the tomb, he found the linen cloths that Jesus was wrapped in, lying on the floor. However, the cloth that covered the head and face of Jesus was folded and placed on its own in a separate area (Jn. 20:7). Jesus, by folding and leaving the head cloth by itself in the tomb, is the clearest indication to me, that He will be back one day to take up His rightful place.

Reading the Bible is something I enjoy doing every day.



Jewish Text is printed twice its usual size during Yom Kippur which means atonement. It consists of fasting and prayer for ten days and finishes on the day of Atonement. So no-one has an excuse not to read the texts and participate in the most important festival in the Jewish calendar.

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