

the
Connection

Summer 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



CARRICKFERGUS
PARISH

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Summer Message

Once again the Communications Group have been hard at work, preparing this third issue of our parish newsletter which I am delighted to introduce. Again I thank and congratulate the Group and express my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to this summer edition of "The Connection".

As I looked through the contents, written and photographic, I was struck yet again by the vitality of the Parish of Carrickfergus and Whitehead, by the generous sharing of time and talents by so many, young and old. Another and very personal thought struck me - How blessed I am to be a priest in and for such a community. This is a beautiful parish in so many ways and, as I approach the second anniversary of my appointment here, I warmly and gladly pay tribute to the spirit of humble service that flourishes here in the cause of Jesus Christ and His Church.

Pope Saint John XXIII, who convoked the Second Vatican Council, once said: "The Catholic Church is not an archaeological museum. She is the ancient village fountain which gives water to the generation of today as she has to those of the past." That most compelling image of the Church is variously and dynamically reflected in the pages of this issue of "The Connection", not least in those presenting something of the faith journey of our children and in particular their reception of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. One of the glories of any parish is a well-run primary school with a strong Catholic ethos and we are fortunate indeed to have such a school in St Nicholas'. We as a parish owe so much to Mr Kieran Austin and all of his staff for their commitment to the formation and care of our young people. However, teachers cannot be truly effective communicators of faith without the cooperation of parents, and in that regard I applaud the Retreat Day for our P6 and P7 children and our recently established liturgical drama group for children.



Ours is a historic parish with a vibrant awareness of our religious and cultural inheritance and a profound respect for the memory of our faithful departed. Our Cemetery Committee deserves to be acknowledged for its careful stewardship of this precious legacy. It is precisely its antiquity as well as its natural splendour that draws so many visitors to our parish - I welcome all of them among us and I wish all our parishioners a peaceful and restful summer. The blessing of God be with us.

P. J. Owens, P.P.

First Holy Communion and Confirmation

Congratulations to all the children in the parish who celebrated their First Holy Communion on Saturday 4th June 2016. They have been preparing for the sacrament throughout the year and were a real credit to their families on the day.



Thank you to our school principal Mr Kieran Austin and all of his staff for their commitment to the formation and care of our young people.

Sacrament of Confirmation

On Friday 22nd April 2016, 28 children from St Nicholas' Primary School received the Sacrament of Confirmation, alongside 7 children from Acorn Integrated Primary School and 5 children from other local schools.

Fr Peter was joined by Bishop Anthony Farquhar who administered the sacrament. We wish all our P7 pupils good luck in their new schools. We know you will continue to make us proud.



Retreat Day for Primary 6 & 7 Pupils

On Wednesday 15th June, our parish held the annual Primary 6 and 7 Retreat Day. Thank you to Mr. Austin for allowing St Nicholas' School hall to be used for this event which was attended by pupils from St Nicholas' Primary School and Acorn Integrated Primary School.

The retreat began at 1:30 and the children had to agree on 10 rules that they would obey during the day, such as not talking over each other, to treat others with respect and to not argue. Then the leaders organised games for them, for example "duck duck goose" and "fruit salad".

After watching a short clip from Toy Story, the children talked about what they thought were the characteristics of a good friend. They also participated in a discussion about the Year of Mercy and how they could apply acts of mercy with their family, neighbours, community and parish.

By this time, the children had worked up an appetite and were ready for their nuggets & chips. Later on while the children were relaxed, Bill talked to them about spending time with Jesus and having a personal relationship with Him.

The children then practised for their assembly to the parents at the end of the retreat to show them what they had been doing and learnt. The assembly featured hymns, prayers of the faithful and a story about the colours of the rainbow symbolising friendship.

I think that the Retreat Day is important as it brings the Primary 6 and 7's closer to their faith as they progress into the next school year, and to give them time to spend together before they part ways and move on to their separate schools.



Written by Caoimhe Rice of the Youth Pastoral Council

Izabela
BUDRUTE

Mikayla

BEST

TEAM

KALAN

Sasha
Trombino



Children's Drama Group

If you are looking for truth, look no further than into the eyes of a child. Yes, a little white lie may escape when there is an interrogation over the last slice of chocolate cake – but, essentially, they speak the truth.

No better people, then, to tell the story of the final hours leading to the death of Jesus. Children have a very compelling way of articulating the truths of the gospel in a way an adult never could. They are simple and sincere in the expression of their faith. This has the potential to speak deeply to a roomful of adults who may be given to cynicism, doubt or the over-complications of the modern world.



On Good Friday evening, family, friends and the wider parish community came together to pray the Stations of the Cross, led by our newly formed children's drama group. The children reflected on each Station and ended with a dramatic interpretation of "Above All", sung beautifully by Catherine McCallum and accompanied by our folk choir. The congregation were impressed by the prayerfulness of the children and by the hard work they had put in.



My thanks go to all the children who came along to the rehearsals, to our choir and in particular to Fr. Owens who couldn't have been more supportive of our first tentative steps as a new parish group. Very special thanks must go to Oran, Nadia, Hannah, Ala, Ethan and Olivia who took part in the liturgy.

We are looking forward to getting together in the new school year again. Whether children have participated in drama groups before or this is their first time, this is not only a great way to make friends in other years, but also build and develop communication, presentation and self-awareness skills within a relaxed and fun environment. I look forward to seeing lots of new faces in the autumn!

Written by Louise Mayne

Events Now & Then

Family Events in 1995

Sometimes having a good clearout turns up pieces of interesting memorabilia, and so it was with "Parish Newsletter Volume 1 Issue 1 from Easter 1996. Under the headline "Family Events in 1995" we find Baptisms. The following were welcomed into the Church in 1995. May they keep the Light of faith alive in their hearts.



Mark Edward Teegan
Adam Patrick Brice
Ethan Francis Hooper
Shea Danny Tierney Brock
Nina Meg Conlon
Lara Marese Finnegan
Morgan McKeown
Emmet Joseph Rice
Justin Reid
Conor Michael Mc Swiggan
James David Kane
Matthew Smith
Kieran Christopher McGahan
Catherine Ellen Keys
Saoirse Celeste Cowan
Rory Christian Noble Turner
Shawnee Lee Armstrong
Ciara McCabe

Kenneth John Black
Lauren Kelly
Sarah Elizabeth Hutchinson
Christopher James Clarke
Catherine Holly McGonigle
Sarah Mary Teague
Stephen Mark Jarman
Dearbhail Mairead Rice
Lara May Frampton
Stephen John Downie
Melissa Brioge Thompson
Danielle Marie Flanagan
Peter O'Kane
Bronagh Eilish Stewart
David Thomas McGuinness
Jessica Ann McDaid
Natash Eileen Mulholland
Stephen John Devlin

All of these young people will turn 21 this year, so Happy 21st to you all! It would be lovely to find out how you are all doing, so why not get in touch with anyone on the Editorial team for a feature in the next issue - we would love to hear from you.

Father Hugh Crossan was the Parish Priest at this time, sadly no longer with us, but his final resting place is in the old graveyard above the church. He ministered through very trying times, including the arson attack on the red brick version of St Nicholas. Rest in peace.

Pentecost

Pentecost is one of the great feasts in the Church calendar, and marks the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. It is celebrated fifty days after Easter Sunday. In St Nicholas' and in Our Lady of Lourdes', the Pentecost celebrations were very colourful. The churches were decorated with red ribbons to symbolise the tongues of flame which touched each disciple. After Mass, the children released red balloons which floated up and away from the church, and soared high into the skies above Carrickfergus, Whitehead and beyond. A truly uplifting experience.



Parish Liturgy Day



On Saturday 18th June, the Parish Pastoral Council hosted a Liturgy Day for all Ministers of the Eucharist, Ministers of the Word, Music Ministers and Sacristans. The theme of the day was "Understanding the Mass" and the significance of each stage of the Mass, including the importance of each ministry.

The event was attended by not only our own parishioners, but also representatives of the Loughshore Parishes, Glengormley Parish and St Gerard's Parish.

This was the first 'cross-parish' event organised since the formation of our Pastoral Community, and many of those who attended the seminar, praised the content of the programme as well as the effective presentation.

The Parish Pastoral Council is grateful to the Diocesan Liturgy Commission, led on the day by Father Patrick Sheehan, who facilitated the event.

Also, sincere thanks to the members of our Social & Hospitality Group who ensured that all of our guests were well catered for with a beautiful buffet lunch.

Autumn Club

The Autumn Club, which was founded back in 1998, is a cross community group for men and women aged 55 years and over. The club meets in St Nicholas' Parish Hall every Wednesday from 1.00 – 4.00pm and regular activities include bingo, soft bowls, curling and armchair aerobics. Members also enjoy shopping trips to towns like Enniskillen and Ballymena, have an annual Christmas dinner, occasional tea dances, and an annual holiday within Ireland (previous destinations including Westport, Killarney and Sligo).

Admission is £1.50 per week and new members are always welcome. If you have any interest in joining the group please contact Mary Carton on 028 9336 1367 or Joy Rankin on 028 9336 3058.



Please let the communication 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.



Architecture of Our Lady of Lourdes' Church

The history of Our Lady of Lourdes' Church has been lovingly recorded by Paddy "PJ" O'Donnell in his excellent book. The architecture of the building is also interesting. It was made in Hiberno-Romanesque revival style. This is characterised by the use of semi-circular, rounded arches.



The tops of the windows are rounded arches. The same tall shape is used as a decorative panel carved into the marble lectern, and two more on the main altar frame the Greek letters alpha and omega. More arches span the ceiling.

There is an arch above the tabernacle, and others support a domed canopy above it. A decorative row of wooden arches runs along both sides of the ceiling. Outside, a counterpart Romanesque frieze of stone arches underlines the edges of the roof. Under each gable end these become a very pleasing set of rising arches that step up to the apex, and down again. The recessed main and side doors are also crowned with arches. Perhaps most beautiful of all are the arches around the belfry, which top a ring of slender columns (with two sections walled in for strength).

The main sections of the stained-glass windows have rows of arches, which form an interlocking pattern like fish scales.

To compliment these semi-circular arches, you will find many complete circles. The bell tower is cylindrical. Before the 1999 refurbishment there were round columns inside to either side of an altar rail that was a line of arches. The baptismal font is a great rounded bowl, while the holy water font has a quarter-sphere hollow for people to dip their fingers. Stone columns with Romanesque capitals frame the main door. Coloured columns decorate the front of the Italian marble altar and lectern.

A couple of other shapes are found detailing the church, ones common across Whitehead and Carrickfergus. A quatrefoil is a shape made from four overlapping circles (the name is French for “four leaves”). A trefoil is the equivalent shape that uses three circles. In the context of a church, they bring to mind the cross, and the Holy Trinity.



The Roman numerals on each Station of the Cross are written inside bevelled quatrefoil hollows. Squares down the centre line of the ceiling (where lights used to hang) have a quatrefoil in the middle. A row of them decorated the altar rail. Trefoils are cut into the end of every pew. Outside, lines of ridge tiles on the roof each have trefoil-shaped holes through them. At the ends of the church, finial crosses at the top of each gable resemble four quatrefoils joined around a central circle.

This wealth of deliberate architectural detail was included in Our Lady of Lourdes' design for a good reason. All those trefoils and quatrefoils are symbols to remind us of Calvary, of the Trinity, and perhaps also of the humble clover leaf that Saint Patrick used to teach the Christian message. The round tower and strong arches of the church speak to strength, not just of masonry, but of faith. The curves and circles lend this house of God a harmony, a unity, and a light that create a very peaceful space for prayer and contemplation.

Written by Stephen O'Donoghue

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What Is Spirituality?



Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives. In general, it gives us a sense of connection with something greater than ourselves. For some, it's about the practice of religion, going to church, synagogue, mosque, and so on. For others, it's more personal.

Some people get in touch with their spiritual side through private prayer, yoga, meditation, quiet reflection, or even long walks. It actually allows people to explore and discover their personal identity, which changes throughout life as relationships with humanity change.

Spirituality does not give people any belief system or rules. While spirituality may include elements of religion, they are not the same thing. Religion assists in teaching us teaches us what is right and wrong, true and false, and allows us to practice rituals which bring us closer to God. Spirituality, through listening to our inner voice, can help us find meaning of life which enables us to live with a positive outlook. Spirituality can teach us that all human existence is the same and our cultural differences are only superficial. This realisation can allow us to embrace our fellow human beings and walk the path to enlightenment together as friends, helping one another instead of creating obstacles. The true essence of spirituality allows us to use our free will properly. A good spiritual attitude to life can give us a sense of worth and value in the community and world. It can also have a very positive effect on our emotional health.

The Dalai Lama at the beginning of the 20th century said, "Human beings should take 5 or 10 minutes every day and find a quiet space for themselves and think of nothing, listen to nothing, look at nothing, and say nothing".

Written by Patsy Bell (Steering Group Secretary)



It's all change on the Parish Cells Steering Group!

After chairing our Parish Cells Steering Group for the last six years, Margaret Webb is taking a well-earned rest. The new Steering Group is as follows:

- Chairperson: Tommy Mone
- Vice Chairperson: Maria Flanagan
- Secretary: Patsy Bell
- Treasurer: Matt Monaghan
- Other members: Linda Mellon, Anne McFerran and Jim Mullan

The new Steering Group extend a heartfelt thanks to Margaret for her work during the past six years. The Steering Group will have their first meeting after the summer break on Tuesday 30th August 2016.



Parish Repository

The Parish Repository is situated on the left hand side as you enter St. Nicholas' Church in Carrickfergus. We are open on Saturday before and after the 6pm Vigil Mass, and on Sunday, before and after the 11.30am Mass.



The repository carries a comprehensive stock of gifts and cards for various occasions, including Baptismal, First Holy Communion, Confirmation and the Advent season. Our range of stock includes; missals, rosaries, candles, prayer cards, as well as other gifts including a selection of angel products, pens and laser cut wood crosses. We also stock the 'Florentine Collection' of statues. We sell Catholic papers and monthly magazines, which cover many topics including religious views and current affairs. These can be ordered from the repository. We source items for the sacramental and liturgical needs of the parish. From September onwards, the repository moves into its busiest season for Advent and Christmas, having sourced our new stock in July.

The repository can also order larger items on request.



During the year the repository provides a pop-up stall in Our Lady of Lourdes' Church, Whitehead after the 9.30am Mass. During these visits, light refreshments are served. This gives our Whitehead parishioners the opportunity to see what is on offer from the repository. The pop-up stall also makes appearances at other parish events, for example the Christmas Fair. Our parish is one of very few in the diocese that has a fully functioning repository. Only last year the Diocesan Resource Centre in Belfast closed.

We would like to thank all of our customers over the years for their continued support of the repository. Everyone is very welcome to come and visit during the year.

Written by Patrick Quinn

Care for Creation

Prayer for our common home

An interdenominational event was held at Woodburn Forest in May. This took the form of a prayer walk, beginning at the space where three native trees had been planted, and ending beside the drill site, where a group of sunflowers were thoughtfully positioned near the fence. The walk was led by Jonny Hanson from the Vineyard church in Carrickfergus, supported by our Parish Pastoral Council member Paul Smith. The Prayer Walk an uplifting experience, and gave strength and purpose to those present. Jonny read from Pope Francis' encyclical on Climate change, and spoke in a very meaningful way about our stewardship of the world we all inhabit. It looks like our prayers were answered, news came through on Thursday 16th June that the drilling company had found nothing but water and would be pulling out.

Beekeeping

The most amazing of the worlds tinier creatures, the honey bee, stands unique in the way it has become a friend to man. Long before sugar came to Europe, honey was the only source of the sweetness that people craved. Being a beekeeper is an ancient and well respected art, which requires a steady hand, calm nerves, and a commitment to the welfare of your bees. Its not for everyone.

These masterful creatures manufacture perfectly hexagonal wax cells, fill them with honey, and cap them to seal it in - and they do it all in the dark! The health properties of honey, pollen, and even the wax cappings have yet to be fully explored, but many's the sore throat has been soothed by honey and lemon.

Without bees orchards will not be pollinated, and fruit crops will fail, but bees are in danger due to the use of pesticides, and their future is in jeopardy.

If you would like to find out more about this absorbing hobby, check out EABKA online, or speak to me anytime.

Written by Frankie Cowan



A Knotty Problem

Plans to develop an area adjacent to the school playground have been put on hold due to the discovery of a very unpleasant presence. This unwelcome guest appears where he is not wanted, and will not go away without serious intervention. The plant in question is Japanese Knotweed, an invasive species with an amazing ability to colonise areas and exploit weaknesses in structures. It can push its way up through paved surfaces, round pipe work, and it can dislodge hard features such as walls.

Key ID Features



It is unfortunate, but until the knotweed problem is resolved, the planned improvements will have to be put on hold. Removal of knotweed is hugely expensive.

In the meantime, the flat grassy areas and raised beds will be getting a makeover to allow the pupils to make the most of the educational activities available outside the classroom.

Our Parish Cemeteries

Some seven years ago, while visiting his family graves, parishioner and landscape gardener, Eamonn Grant decided to tidy up the rather dilapidated Prospect Graveyard. He was soon joined by some other volunteers, Albert Lennox, Tommy Mone, Eamonn Devenney, and Colin Grant, and the Cemetery Committee was formed. Initial funding was generously supplied by Albert Lennox, and the refurbishment began. Plans were ambitious, to enlarge the available space with a low maintenance design, provide off road parking, and to make safe accessible paths throughout, while respecting the existing graves.

Step through the green gates seven years on, and you will find this work is almost complete. Prospect is surrounded on two sides by high hedges, and mature beech trees, giving it a very rural feel, and a real air of tranquillity. Baby rabbits find grazing on the neatly mown grass, and they are not unwelcome visitors. Two wooden benches provide seating for times of quiet reflection.



Many of the older graves, some dating back to the early 1800's, tell the story of family loss which indicate just how hard life was in those days. Some inscriptions have faded over the years, and clearly, there are no family members left to tend those graves. One large Celtic cross has the family inscription in Irish, dating back to 1920.

The newly completed section will allow for up to two hundred more grave sites. They are flanked by deep concrete plinths which facilitate the erection of headstones. This area will not have surrounds so that it will be low maintenance in the years to come. A water tap has been installed for the convenience of visitors.

A red acer tree sets off the beautiful Mourne Granite stone which provides the memorial to the little souls of the parish. Beside the Madonna and child image, the inscription from Mark chapter 10 reads: "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." Follow the main path towards the trees, and there you will find another granite stone, and a garden area nearing completion. Eamonn takes up the story "I was never happy with the term 'pauper's grave', and always wanted to find some way to remember those who were laid to rest without the dignity of a marked grave. This stone calls on all who ... 'happen to pass this way please say a Pater, Ave and Gloria for the forgotten souls.' The inscription was supplied by Father Curran, and it feels very appropriate. People will also be able to plant flowers in the garden as a form of remembrance." A formal dedication and blessing will follow when the work is complete. Eamonn is responsible for digging the Parish graves, and he views this task with the due solemnity and respect which lies behind all that he does.

Across the road from the cemetery is Holy Trinity Church, who kindly give the use of their car park to mourners attending funerals at Prospect. This gesture of goodwill is much appreciated.

The old parish graveyard behind the Parochial House is used less often now, although burials do still take place there. It is the resting place for some of our former parish priests, the last one being Father Hugh Crossan. Some of our older graves have no one to tend them, and Father Owens has suggested that people might like to adopt a grave that needs some loving care.

Many, many thanks are due to the Cemetery Committee for their hard work, financial commitment, expertise, and selfless dedication, which is so evident in all that we can see today.

The dictionary contains various definitions of the word 'Prospect' – from the 1530's where it meant 'an extensive view of the landscape' to the more modern – hope, expectation, anticipation, the possibility that something better is to come in the future. It is on this sure and certain hope our faith is founded.

Dates and times for Cemetery Sunday will be in the bulletin closer to the date.

Produced by the Parish Communications Committee:



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Pauline Cowan, Jackie Entwistle, Sarah Johnston,
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and Bill Webb.