

the Connection

Summer 2017



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 Sunday in the month
Whitehead: 1st Sunday 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



This summer issue of "The Connection" really captures the vitality of our parish family, not least in regard to the close cooperation among myself as Parish Priest and Chaplain, St Nicholas' Primary School and the wider faith community. Of course this is manifested especially in the joyful celebrations of First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, but is expressed in many other ways through the constant collaboration of the parish community and the parish primary school. I am delighted to acknowledge here the unfailing support of Mr Kieran Austin and all his staff in St Nicholas' Primary School for my own ministry and for that of our Pastoral Council. We have a parish primary school to be proud of and to promote as an outstanding example of Catholic

education, offering an ethos of care and development for children from all faith backgrounds, from all cultures.

Our Parish Pastoral Council, led by Mary McCormack and Paul Smith, has not only agreed a new constitution, but completed a Three-Year Development Plan which Bishop Noel Treanor has kindly consented to launch. This plan for the Parish of Carrickfergus and Whitehead is based on the Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of Down and Connor, and is the fruit of much hard work on the part of all the members of the Parish Pastoral Council, not least our newest members.

As we move into summer 2017, I am very mindful that next summer (August) will see the World Meeting of Families in Dublin and very probably the visit to Ireland of His Holiness Pope Francis I. We here in Carrickfergus and Whitehead, in partnership with the other parishes in our Loughshore Pastoral Community, will be sharing in our diocesan preparations for these truly significant events.

So, fair to say, both at home and further afield - it is all happening!

In the meantime, on behalf of the Communications Committee, the Pastoral Council and myself, I wish all parishioners and seasonal visitors, a safe and happy summer.

Grace and Blessings,

P. J. Owens, P.P.

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First Holy Communion

Congratulations to all the children in the parish who celebrated their First Holy Communion on Saturday 3rd June 2017. They have been preparing for the sacrament at school and **'Do This In Memory'** masses throughout the year and were a real credit to their families on the day.



Thank you to all those involved in preparing the children particularly Mrs Maloney, Mrs McIlmail, Mrs Muir, Mrs Graham and Father Owens. Special thanks to the co-ordinators of the DTIM programme Maura Hughes, Sharon Houston and Claire Pollard, and to the wonderful St Nicholas' children's choir, folk group musicians and all those who helped prepare the church, flowers and refreshments. St Nicholas' Primary School hosted a celebratory brunch for the children, their families and the parish community after the mass and the children all very much enjoyed their special day.



Parish Walking Group



We all know that any exercise is good for us, be it from a perspective of physical fitness to mental well-being. I started walking by myself 3 or 4 years ago but it took a conversation with Fr Peter, during a personal difficult time, to prompt me to form a Parish Walking Group so that I could benefit from the companionship of others. Almost a year on, the group, while small in number is alive and thriving. We meet on a Monday evening at 7pm (although from July on we are switching to a Tuesday evening) and then walk for about an hour wherever the mood takes us in all weathers.

Depression and loneliness can impact anyone and I have been struck by the friendships I have made. We have a laugh, chat about things going on in our lives, work issues and much reminiscing of days gone by. We walk through different parts of the town at a gentle pace – the group is about conversation and fellowship not training for a Marathon.



It is very easy to come to Mass on a Sunday but not really get to know people who we see on a weekly basis but effectively ignore. Being in a crowd can be very isolating. How many times do we individually say hello to people we only know by sight?

I am not a particularly shy person and so I had the courage to take on this role. However, the benefit of creating this group has had a much stronger effect on me in getting to know people from the parish who I was ignoring and even not seeing at all. The group is open to anyone and is a come when you can group. No pressure, no arduous mountain climbs (although the geography of Carrickfergus does present some occasional challenges) – just plenty of craic.

All Hands Volunteers

For the last
seven months

Seamus Cowan

former pupil of
St Nicholas PS
and Aquinas GS
has been
travelling
in India
and Nepal.



He recently joined up with the charity 'All Hands Volunteers' to help build a rural school for 350 children, in the mountainous region of Sindhupalchowk in Nepal. This is an area that was completely destroyed in the 2015 earthquake. The community lost everything in the disaster and are now slowly trying to rebuild their lives and the infrastructure needed to provide for their children. Seamus and the other volunteers helped finish the school project in May this year and then celebrated in true Nepali style with the locals.

Seamus wants to pass on a big thank you to all those who donated, helping him reach his target of £1000 He promised a Friar Tuck / monks style shaven hair cut, but some donors begged him to keep his lovely curls instead! . Names of those who donated are now displayed against a child's handprint on the school wall and will be there for generations to come.

Thank you everyone.



'All Hands Volunteers' are a charity that provides hands-on assistance to survivors of natural disasters around the world.

Article by Eileen Cowan (#proudmum)

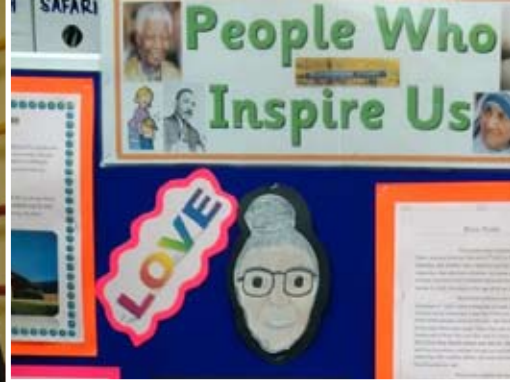
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Sacrament of Confirmation



On Monday 15th
Sacrament of Conf
and 2 children from

Fr Peter was joined by E
We wish all our P7 pupil
We know you will conti



May 2017, 14 children from St Nicholas' Primary School received the firmation, alongside 6 children from Acorn Integrated Primary School and other local schools.

Bishop Noel Trainor who administered the sacrament. Wishes good luck in their new schools. Continue to make us proud!

Mr O'Rourke

Mr O'Rourke, former Principal of St Nicholas Primary School passed away on the 28th April this year. He served our school for over forty years, as teacher, and then as Principal, first of the boys school, and then of the newly amalgamated St Nicholas PS.



Francis (Frank) O'Rourke

A native of Kilkeel, he was educated in Newry, followed by St Josephs Training College. He was a man with a great love of learning which stayed with him throughout his life, maintaining his interest in Maths and Economics through further study.

He was also a huge tennis fan, and there was nothing he liked better when term was over than to travel to Wimbledon to watch the game, set, and match.

His funeral in St Agnes was attended by former colleagues from St Nicholas, our current Principal Mr Austin, and Mrs Byrne, who began her teaching career under his guidance. After the service the cortege made the journey to Kilkeel to his final resting place.

Rest in Peace.



Mr O'Rourke with Emmet and James Cowan at Confirmation in 1995.

If you have been bereaved you may find it helpful to speak to others:

Carrickfergus Bethany Bereavement Support Group are there for you, they can provide support, advice or just be there to talk to about how you are feeling. The Bethany Bereavement support team can now be contacted directly on their own number. Phone or text 07474937661



Jubilee Community Farm

An exciting and innovative proposal for a community farm is at the advanced planning stage in the East Antrim area. The project is the brainchild of PhD student Jonny Hanson, and will be situated in the walled garden area at Drumalis in Larne. For many years this space was the home of Drumalis Garden Centre, but on the retirement of its owner, the tenancy will be taken up by Jubilee Farm.



The project has the support of Sister Margaret Rose, of the Cross and Passion Order, who is the Director of Drumalis Retreat Centre.

Jonny comes to this project from a background of Christian belief, and a deep commitment to caring for the environment. He believes that our churches should participate in the stewardship of God's world, reflecting the views on the environment expressed by Pope Francis in his encyclical 'Laudato Si'. (a copy of which he recently gave to Donald Trump).

It is hoped that the project will constitute itself as a community benefit society, and the main aims are threefold.

1. Community farm – the first of its kind in NI, where people can be involved in the cultivation of seasonal organic vegetables.

2. Care Farm – which aims to provide practical, positive therapeutic opportunities for vulnerable individuals, including people who are suffering from the modern day scourge of loneliness.

3. Education – to provide inspiring agricultural and environmental learning sessions for school, churches, families and individuals.



The project has already received start-up funding from UnLtd, the social enterprise charity, and hopes to attract further backing from individuals and relevant bodies. Local schools are enthusiastic about the educational opportunities Jubilee farm will be able to offer outside the classroom, especially if it is granted Forest School Status.

Jonny has brought together a team of well qualified people who will bring their own talents to the work at Jubilee Farm. First of these is Nicole from Canada who is the contact person at jubilee.farm.larne@gmail.com. The Connection hopes to follow this developing story with update articles and photographs as the plans take shape.

Best wishes to Jonny as he travels to Nepal in August to complete his PhD thesis on 'Snow Leopards and Livestock farming.'

Article by Pauline Cowan

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Called & Gifted

The Carrickfergus and Whitehead Pastoral Council hosted the first stage of a 'Called and Gifted Programme' in St. Nicholas' Church on 26th and 27th May. The programme was presented by Fr. Damian

McCaughan from Glengormley Parish and Jim Deeds from the Living Church Office. In attendance were 21 people from Carrickfergus and Whitehead as well as 5 people from St. Mary's On The Hill Parish, Glengormley.

The programme was written by Sherry Weddell and developed by The St. Catherine Of Siena Institute. The main aim of this part of the programme is to examine the Spiritual gifts and Charisms of the Holy Spirit which are given to each of us freely. Through this examination we are encouraged to discern and develop our Charisms and use them, not only in Church situations, but also in everyday life. All Christians have a 'vocation' or 'mission' in life and part of that mission is to follow Jesus and spread the love of God to everyone. The Charisms of the Holy Spirit enable us to discern our vocation and help us to fulfil that mission.



Gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to us through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist to help form part of our inner transformation which enables us, as Christians, to use our Charisms. Christians have lots of Charisms that they may not even be aware of. This first part of the programme is designed to identify the Charisms of the Holy Spirit which are not for keeping, but using in everyday life situations. By answering a questionnaire participants were able to identify how many of these Charisms they have - leadership, healing, teaching, almsgiving, joy, hospitality and mercy are just a few of these Charisms.

Fr. Damian and Jim led us through 24 Charisms and explained their use in the world today. These Charisms are used both inside and outside the Church. Using these Charisms outside the Church in everyday life is the main aim of this new initiative, thus promoting the greater Glory of God through our Faith.

Both facilitators created a very relaxed atmosphere with their odd joke and humorous banter which encouraged everyone attending to interact well. There will be follow-up interviews with participants with the intention of encouraging people to participate more in Church and community life.

Comments from participants: "I'm delighted to have attended this first part of the programme and I look forward to the follow-up interviews later".

"I was disappointed that there were so few people attending the programme because I learned so much about Charisms of the Holy Spirit and myself".

Article by Patsy Bell

Parish Pastoral Council

I am very honoured to be the Chairperson of the Carrickfergus and Whitehead Parish Pastoral Council as I call myself a 'blow in'. I came to Whitehead in September 2000 from England, where I had lived for 18 years.



I work as a midwife at the Royal Maternity Hospital, which keeps me busy along with a 24 year old Daughter and 19 year old son.

I was approached by Gerardine Stewart about 8 years ago to join a liturgy Group in the Parish. I was happy with my role of cleaning Our Lady of Lourdes church occasionally on a Rota, however little did I know where accepting her invitation would lead.

Joining the Liturgy Group immediately introduced me to a great enthusiastic group of people most of whom are very good friends now. The Parish Priest at the time gave me a new and deep understanding of the liturgy. In getting involved with the groups this lead on to joining the Parish Pastoral Council about 6 years ago. Another very committed group of people who give valuable time to supporting their parish and Priest.

The Parish Pastoral Council, assists and supports the Parish Priest in his role of planning, organising, promoting and delivering various spiritual pastoral and religious events in the parish.

I took over as chairperson from Bill Webb last year. Bill was an admirable role model to follow, and now leads us, The Parish Pastoral Council into the next stage of development. In the past months the 11 members of the PPC, including Father Owens have developed '**The Constitution of Carrickfergus and Whitehead Parish Pastoral Council**' which has been endorsed by Bishop Treanor. We are going to introduce '**The 3-year Pastoral Plan of The Parish**' in September. We have incorporated the five themes of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2013, and we have also acknowledged the priorities identified by the Parish, during the Year of Mercy listening event.

Myself, Father Owens and all the members of the PPC are very grateful and thank all those who give their time to the day to day running and freely giving their support to their Parish.

God Bless

Mary McCormack



Produced by the Parish Communications Committee:

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