

the Connection

Christmas 2018



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,
Tuesday and Thursday 10:30am to 10:45pm
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 months' notice is required.



Parish Priest: Father Peter Owens

Parochial House, 8 Minorca Place, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, BT38 8AU
Tel: 028 9336 3269 or Emergency Mobile: 07940 002 830

pp_carrickparish@live.co.uk

www.carrickparish.org



Christmas Message

Welcome to the ninth edition of “The Connection” and, once again, sincere thanks to the Parish Communications Committee, under Paul Mayne, for their dedication and professionalism.



This Christmas edition provides a real flavour not just of how many activities are going on within the parish, but also of how much the parish is engaged with the wider society. In recent years our parish has seen the welcome arrival of many newcomer families from many parts of the world – the article ‘Welcoming Parish’ conveys how much the parish has taken them to its heart and the beautiful contribution they have made to parish life in Carrickfergus and Whitehead.

Obviously the highlight of 2018 was the World Meeting of Families and the visit of Pope Francis in August, marked by us with a most enjoyable Family Day and a large representation from our parish at the Papal Mass in Phoenix Park.

On a personal note, this past year has been an extremely painful one for me and my family on account of the deaths of my father, Don, in February, and my mother, Loretta, in August. I am profoundly grateful to the parishioners of Carrickfergus and Whitehead for the compassion and support they have shown us in our bereavement – it has meant more than you could ever know.

I wish all of you and people visiting us over the holidays a blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Fr P.J. Owens, P.P.

The Guardian Project

The Guardian Project aims to extend a helping hand to people in need. Children from the marginalized communities are encouraged to pursue education through individual sponsorship.



We also visited places where the water pump and local chapel were built by donations. The people that we saw were so poor and lived in homes built from little more than mud and corrugated iron, but they were proud and ever so friendly. Water is a fundamental human need. Each person on Earth requires at least 20 to 50 litres of clean, safe water a day for drinking, cooking, and simply keeping ourselves clean.



We had a great day visiting the school where the children's education is sponsored by lay people such as ourselves. Each child knew their sponsor's name and prayed for them daily. Then home through the heavy traffic which has to be seen to be believed; it was a free for all with bicycles, motorbikes and rickshaws everywhere. We had little more than faith to guide us as there are no road markings or traffic lights to make order of the chaos.

We got up early for Mass at 6:45 am, then had breakfast at 7:30 am before visiting Christ Nagar to meet the blind children at their school. The pupils are range from 4 to 12 years old. They were so happy to meet us and they showed us how to use braille language for reading.

Drinking water, solar power and bringing assistance for income generation activities are just some of the ways the project extends a helping hand and shows solidarity with those in need.

St Nicholas' Primary School

Christmas time already, I can hardly believe it and such a successful year we've had so far.

Thank you so much for all the support you have given to our pupils, staff, Governors, the PTA and myself over the last few months.

Thank you also for your generosity in supporting our chosen charities. Already this year we have donated to good causes including the Mission Schools, Children in Need and St. Vincent de Paul – thank you so much! It's always important to remember those less fortunate than ourselves at this time of year. Fr. Owens reminded our children at the St. Nicholas' Day Mass that we should try our best to remember 'That living is giving, just like our Patron Saint, St. Nicholas'



A big thanks to our very active and hardworking **PTA** who have been extremely busy organising lots of events over the first term. I would like to take this opportunity on their behalf to thank you for all your support and contributions to the range of activities. It was lovely to see our families turn out in such numbers for our recent Family Quiz and Santa visit. With the support of the PTA I would love to be in a financial position to develop an outdoor reading area at some stage.

Our Shared Education Project goes from strength to strength. A recent ETI inspection of the Shared Education Project noted the dedication, hard work and commitment of all those involved in the project. We look forward to the shared lessons planned for 2018-19. As a result of our commitment to Shared Education, our staff will receive training through the Teacher Professional Learning Programme. Additional teacher training helps us to improve the outcomes for all our pupils at St Nicholas’.



I would like to thank the whole staff of St Nicholas’ Primary School for their continuing, unstinting hard work and dedication towards our children. A special thanks to our Governors for their much-valued advice and support. Finally, may I take this opportunity to **wish you and your families a very peaceful and happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.**

Article by Mr Kieran Austin (Principal)

St Nicholas' PTA – We Need YOU!

Joining the PTA isn't about getting sucked into a black hole of volunteering and relentlessly flogging raffle tickets to your long-suffering friends and family. You don't have to have loads of time on your hands (working and stay at home parents are equally welcome); and you don't need to be able to plan tactics like Jurgen Klopp or bake like Mary Berry.

Still technically a "blow in" to Carrickfergus with a busy job, 3 kids and no social life (regular babysitting apparently ends at 2 children); I joined the PTA about 9 months ago, mainly to take an interest in my sons' schooling and to make a few new friends. Everyone has heard horror stories about PTA "politics", but what I found at St Nicholas' was a warm and welcoming motley crew all passionately committed to helping improve their children's school experience.

The PTA raises money to help pay for equipment and activities regular funding doesn't stretch to. This is becoming increasingly important for our children at a time when school budgets are being squeezed tighter than they have ever been before. During 2018/19 school staff have asked us to fundraise for replacement iPad screens and covers, iPad chargers and an outdoor reading area for the playground.



The PTA also provides a forum for parents to have a say in the life of the school and to meet and get to know other parents. This year we have hosted a 'Tea and Tears' event for new P1 parents, organised the Christmas Quiz, manned the Sports Day BBQ, helped towards the School's 20th Anniversary event, held a logo design competition, taken part in the Parish Open Day and organised a Christmas Raffle and World Cup Draw.

If you can't spare the time to become a regular member you can still support PTA events and fundraising, volunteer a little time to help at events, share your fundraising experience or ideas, or let us know about any useful skills or talents you have and any contacts who may contribute to Christmas raffle prizes. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer; but there's also no pressure and no judgement if you can't.



The current team is Marie Anne Templeman (Chairperson), Angela Thompson (Treasurer), Paul Rice (Secretary), Mrs C. Byrne (Teaching Representative), Nicola Clarke, Michelle Connolly, Kevin Galvin, Sarah Johnston, Caroline O'Kane and Lorraine Quinn.



Part of what makes St Nicholas' so special is the family-friendly feel of the school. Helping out with the PTA not only puts you in touch with school staff and other parents, it also shows your child you are interested and invested in their school experience. My boys always ask for the inside scoop on upcoming events and are delighted to tell me when their teachers talk about PTA activity.

All parents, family members, teaching and other school staff are very welcome to join the PTA. Come along and give it a go. I promise there are no minimum sales targets on raffle tickets and there's no pressure to commit every spare minute to bag packing and bun sales. Our next meeting will be in January 2019. Speak to a PTA member or email stnicholaspspta@gmail.com if you would like to come along. New members are always welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

Article by Sarah Johnston

Ulster Project - My American Adventure



During the summer I was extremely lucky to have the opportunity to travel to America with the Ulster Project. After a long, hard application process I was assigned to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and after 6 months preparation, fundraising and group bonding we set off from Dublin for what was to be an unforgettable month.

I stayed with a family who now refer to me as part of their own family; I was welcomed into their home as a stranger and I was devastated when it was time to go. I made many life-long friends on the other side of the world and from all around Belfast. I met many amazing people who each looked out for me during my time in America; and came across many influential individuals through the organised activities and talks from leaders and peacemakers.

I did a lot of charity work alongside the other teens, including working with the Salvation Army to make and deliver packed lunches to different communities around Milwaukee; helping various soup kitchens; working in parks to try and improve small places; fundraising through car washes; and visiting young school children on the poverty line and helping them to read and write. Each of these individual tasks made me more aware of the people in society that require help; and allowed me to become more compassionate and caring towards them.

Alongside this work, we had a couple of sessions a week with our 'Discovery Leader' where we got together as a large group to discuss different issues on a global scale and a personal level. At the beginning of the month we went on retreat where we got the opportunity to get to know each other, and throughout the month we developed this into special friendships.

We learnt about peace in Northern Ireland, we talked about personal emotions and experiences in small groups, and we discovered how we can make small changes in the world around us. Each Sunday we visited different churches; an Episcopal Church, an



African-American Gospel Church, a Native American Church and a Church Of Life. Each of these offered many different experiences which we discussed during our discovery sessions.



Along with all the serious stuff, we had immense fun together through many different activities like pool parties, baseball games, football tournaments, lake parties,

a charity ball, shopping days, a trip to Six Flags theme park, 4th of July parades and parties, trips to Chicago and Madison, basketball games, museum visits, beach days, sleepovers, dress exchanges and much more. All these activities allowed us to make amazing memories and even better friendships; all while experiencing unbelievable things.

On a whole the Ulster Project was an unbelievable, life-changing experience that I am privileged to have been part of. I learned more about myself and my role in society; and I have made life-long friends and memories which I will cherish forever.

If you are aged 14-16 and are interested in getting involved with the Ulster Project visit www.ulsterproject.org to find out more.

Article by Kerry Gilmore

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Christmas Carols with the Abbey Singers



Christmas Carols with the Abbey Singers, St. Nicholas' Church Friday the 30th November.

The choir, based in Jordanstown, Co.Antrim, was formed in 1970, and is conducted by Musical Director Emma Morgan.

As the evening drew to a close it was followed by light refreshments provided by the staff and volunteers of the Parish of Carrickfergus.

Article by Paul Smith



On the night the Abbey Singers literally lived the saying the show must go on, as both their talented accompanist Vickie Schmidt and the choir member lined up as soloist became ill. Their musical director Emma doubled up as choir director and soloist and at very short notice Jonathon Rea stepped in as accompanist. Jonathan is Chief Executive of New Irish Arts and director of the New Irish Choir and Orchestra. He is passionate about using the Arts to encourage people to worship God. After studying music in Cambridge, he taught in Bangor Grammar School for 15 years. The Abbey Singers performance did not tell the back story as they were superb and well received by all those present. Even third choice welcomer Paul Smith chipped in with a gutsy display of warm welcomes from all at Carrick and Whitehead Parish and thanked the hard work of all those that brought it together so well on the night.



Parish Wedding

Rachel Patterson and Niall Clarke were married on Saturday 14th April 2018 at St. Nicholas Church by Fr. Peter Owens.



Niall stood waiting for Rachel at the altar with their 4 month old son, Caleb Clarke. Family and friends made their way to Carrickfergus from across Northern Ireland, Scotland and England for the wedding before travelling to the reception at Ballygally Castle and Hotel.

Article by Pat Clarke



World Meeting of Families Celebrations





Parish Celebrations for the World Meeting of Families kicked off early in Carrickfergus with a family day after Mass on Sunday the 19th August. As we exited through the side door of the church the sun shone down, everything had been lovingly prepared and the rear carpark dressed in colourful buntings made a perfect venue for the event.



World Meeting of Families 21-26 August 2018

There was much anticipation throughout Ireland for the world meeting of families, which took place in Dublin and culminated with the closing mass in Phoenix Park. A bus with 45 of our parish family set off from Carrickfergus on a very wet and windy August morning. The weather did nothing to dispel the sense of enthusiasm though and before long we had arrived in Dublin.



On arrival at the coach park we were directed to a shuttle bus which took us to the starting point of our walk, which in our case was the green route at the North Circular Road Gate to the park. As we walked locals offered us refreshments and the atmosphere was jovial. We were very fortunate to be allocated an area to the right and in front of the altar. This meant we had an un interrupted view of the events as they unfolded.

A huge number of musicians, choirs and singers from all over Ireland were situated in terraced seating on either side of the altar, their contribution to the mass elevated the experience and was greatly admired. As the Pope came into view there was a rapturous shout and cheering from the crowd as the choir sang Tu es Petrus.

The Holy Father was transported throughout the crowds waving and giving blessings and greeting all. He seemed to be very happy being among the people and spent about 30 minutes travelling through the awaiting crowds before celebrating the mass. During this time large numbers of clergy arrived and were seated to the right and left of the altar. Many were wearing ponchos over their specially designed vestments to protect them from the rain. The mass was celebrated in a number of languages to reflect the multicultural nature of our society.



During his homily the Pope spoke movingly delivering a heartfelt apology to those who had been affected by the historical abuse involving the Church in Ireland.

Following the mass gifts were exchanged between the Pope and Arch Bishop of Dublin and then the Pope departed by helicopter. In the closing moments of the gathering we were left with a sense of mixed emotions, for many of us this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to participate in such a special mass with the holy father sharing with thousands of others. I for one was happy and grateful to be part of such an historic event but sad to see the holy father leave. Many thanks to all the organisers and especially those from our parish.

Lourdes Pastoral Centre

The Lourdes Pastoral Centre craft group have had a busy couple of months since starting back in September. They had been working with a Carrickfergus based group, Loving Hands,



who had been making little dolls to send out to children in Ethiopia for Christmas. These were handed over at the end of October (see pictures).



Plans are underway for the new year to join with a group from Greenisland to collaborate on creating some items for the Whitehead Woolen Woods in June. This Council backed initiative will hopefully include some interesting craft classes that anyone can join in with. As always, everyone is most welcome to come and join us on the last Thursday of the month, 7-9pm.

Our crafters are not the only group using the Pastoral Centre and following on from the successful Jive dance classes that took place last Spring, this Autumn saw some of us trying to learn how to Salsa. This was once again a lot of fun and a great form of exercise for all involved, with some 5000 steps being counted per hour, admittedly not all going in the right direction! The talented Loiri, our dance teacher, put us through our paces every Thursday for 6 weeks. Everyone enjoyed it so much we've signed up for another set of classes, this time to try out the Latin American Merengue. More details will follow in January for anyone who might be interested in joining in.

Welcoming Parish

The most important asset any Parish can have is always showing and giving a welcome to newcomers. Carrickfergus and Whitehead Parish has proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that newcomers to the Parish are made very welcome and encouraged to become involved in the Church community. Here are just two stories from families who have settled into our Church community in recent years.



I am Augusta Anaele and originally from Nigeria. I moved to the Parish in May 2008 and was joined a short time later by my husband, C.J. and children Daniel and Angel. As a black family it was a daunting decision to leave our native country and begin a new life elsewhere. When I eventually found the Church I was very kindly welcomed by Fr. Sean Dillon. I was soon befriended by a lot of people as were my family when they arrived. I soon became a Lay Reader for the Church which was a delight and 2 parishioners presented me with a New Sunday Missal, which will always be cherished. I will always be indebted to them for their encouragement and kindness. My husband volunteered and helped the finance committee at weekends and our two children became Altar servers. They were also accepted into the local school which was very important to us as education for them was a main priority. I was introduced to the Cell groups and became a member. As a matter of fact I affectionately call 2 members in my Cell group, aunty and uncle. There are so many people I could mention who helped us settle into

the Parish but would prove impossible to mention them all. My family and I are very grateful to all the Parish Priests who worked here because they showed us encouragement at all times. So I give a big humble Dalu nu (thank you in my native language) to this Parish for all their kindness and we as a family offer God's Blessing to everyone always Amen.

Hello, we are a family originally from Poland and left there 13 years ago to make a new life elsewhere in the world. We lived in Co. Down for 10 years but decided to move and settle in Carrickfergus and Whitehead Parish. We wanted to be part of the community and received



offers from the local school for our children which is very important to us. We have 3 children Bianka who was born in Poland, Alexander and Maddison who were born in Northern Ireland. My husband is Dariusz and I am Marta and our family name is Majer, pronounced without the j. We settled into Parish life very well and our son Alexander became an altar server this year. On his first Sunday serving Mass no other servers turned up so his dad Dariusz served Mass with him that day. They got a round of applause for their efforts which was so heart-warming. We were encouraged to join the choir as Dariusz plays a guitar and I sing. It was even more encouraging when I was asked to sing in my native tongue at Christmas and Easter services in the Church. It was great for other Polish families living here to hear something from home at these special times of the year. All members of the choir have helped us in every way to become part of Parish life. We, as a family, want to continue to serve with our talents and build up this beautiful Parish of St. Nicholas' Carrickfergus and Our lady of Lourdes Whitehead.

Article by Augusta Anaele & Marta Majer



Produced by the Parish Communications Committee:

Claire Bagshaw, Patsy Bell, Joanne Campbell,
Pauline Cowan, Steve Diamond, David Gorman,
Sarah Johnston, Paul Mayne, Shellz-art
and Caoimhe Rice .



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