

Clontarf Parish, Church of St John the Baptist

Easter General Vestry, 6th April 2016

Rector's address

This evening as we gather together as a parish family under God, we review the activities and accomplishments of the past year; we take stock of our current situation including our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges; we acknowledge and affirm the vast amount of work that is done on a day to day basis by so many people who make this parish what it is, and we explore how best to continue to live out our God-given commission to be a beacon of faith, hope, love in this community of Clontarf and beyond.

2015 was a very active and productive year for our parish, including a major programme of restoration on our beautiful parish church. I've asked Jonathan Boyle to outline what has been done a little later on, but I'm sure you will have all noticed the obvious improvements in warmth, comfort and sound. When we reflect on the facilities we now enjoy both in the church and in this marvellous Parish Centre, we must surely realise how truly blessed we are, and in turn remain vigilant for opportunities to use our facilities to be a blessing to others.

The sheer volume of work done has obviously had very serious financial implications on us as a parish, which will be highlighted by our Treasurer in the presentation of the accounts. The fact that our annual parish activities consistently run at a deficit is an issue which must be tackled now as a matter of priority over the next year or two in light of our vastly reduced capital reserves.

There is however, much to be encouraged by. Thanks be to God we have had a year of much activity and growth, and perhaps another one of the continuing challenges is to find ways of engaging our newer parishioners fully in the life and witness of the parish. It was very encouraging to see the size of the team which helped out at last year's Autumn Fair, and the number of new people involved. The old adage 'many hands make light work' holds true, and we will continue to need that kind of help and support to make future events as successful as that was. Too often in the past, the work load has been distributed among too few – the old reliables if you will – a situation which is neither fair, nor viable in the long term. Following the example of our Lord and Saviour, the Christian life necessarily involves service, and in order for this parish to continue to serve the needs of our own parishioners and the wider community, all of who consider ourselves parishioners must in turn be willing to serve in whatever capacity we can. An increased team effort in running our various events will also have the positive corollary of building up our sense of community, and serve as a means of getting to know each other better – a task which can be challenging in a busy, urban setting such as this.

Our growing sense of community is already well served by such events and activities as Sunday Club, the weekly tea/coffee after the 10.30 service, the monthly coffee mornings and movie nights, the various social events run by the Needs group, and the activities of the parish organisations and clubs which operate out of the Parish Centre, in addition to the inclusion of Greenlanes NS in our monthly Family Services. As a Christian community, I believe we must strive to provide cradle to grave ministry, and there are identifiable gaps in this ministry at

present. New initiatives such as the Men's Group which started recently, and the Sunday morning crèche which we hope to get up and running in the Autumn, are attempts to fill in these gaps, and I am always open to new suggestions as to how to fill in others. Sadly, the most obvious gap in the ministry of the parish continues to be to our teenagers and young adults, and I would particularly welcome assistance in trying to rectify this situation.

As a Christian community, faith development and spirituality must remain a priority, and the existence of three different prayer groups and the regular Ecumenical Bible Study series testify to our commitment in this regard. While the success of such ventures can never be measured by the numbers attending, I do issue a challenge this evening to those of you who have never attended any of these to give even one of them a try – you might well be surprised by what God has in store for you! The same can be said about our worship services, whether on Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings or Wednesday mornings - and so I issue a similar challenge to those of you who might not be regular attendees: gathering together in the Lord's House and around His Table is the platform from which springs all our other activities and ministries.

Of course, we in this parish are also part of a wider Christian community, and joint ventures with the other five churches in Clontarf, such as the Bridge Magazine, Easter Card and Clontarf Camino continue to be well received and glorify our One Lord and Saviour.

Once again last year we were blessed in this parish with a large number of baptisms, nineteen in all since our last Easter General Vestry Meeting, a figure which augurs well for the future of our parish. Sadly,

we also lost a number of people since last we met in this context, and tonight we remember with a few moments silence Ron Conville, Cecil Gallagher, Marie Switzer, Joan Baldwin, Elsie Emerson and Ethel Priestman.

‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. They are blessed indeed says the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.

As always, I want to thank the many people who make up the wonderful team with whom I am privileged to work- there are quite a few so please bear with me:

- Mark Acheson, for his assistance in worship, pastoral care, ministry, administration, and his support in many other ways.
- Our outgoing churchwardens, Albert Adamson and Yvonne Reid, for an excellent and onerous year’s work which included a lot of extra time and effort setting up the Parish Centre for worship each week while the church was closed.
- Jonathan Boyle for the mammoth task of overseeing the entire project of restoration on the church.
- Our outgoing Glebe wardens, Jonathan Boyle and Stuart McConnell, who are always on hand to help sort out any problems related to the rectory or church grounds.
- Our organist *extraordinaire*, John Rowden, who this year celebrates 50 years as organist of this parish – what a ministry he continues to have (& Sandra and Stephanie Maxwell who very ably stand in on the rare occasions John is not available)
- All those who make the effort to sing in the choir on special occasions.

- The Outgoing Select Vestry Members (esp. Jeanne Colvin, Stuart McConnell & Clive Jackson who have indicated their intention to step down this year) Clive and Stuart have over 30 years service between them in various capacities, Jeanne was a more recent addition but her term of service includes two years as Rector's Churchwarden
- Treasurer and Secretary, Nadine Watters and Bruce Maxwell for consistent dedication and expertise in their fields
- Trevor Garrett, official title Parish Centre supervisor but so much more besides
- PCMC especially Bruce Maxwell
- Needs Group, Finance Group and Fabric Group
- Jack Storey, our Church Warden Emeritus
- Ted Jones and Shirley Davies for administering the chalice at Holy Communion, and Ted for helping at funerals and other services.
- Sunday Club leaders: Lynn Boyle, Fiona Ince, Elma Jackson, Olwen Lynch, Heather Hunter, Wendy Walker, John Davis, as well as those who help on an occasional basis.
- Cathy Atkin, Sandra Sargent and Lynn Boyle for preparing the school children for Family Services, and to all who read the lessons week by week.
- Those who decorate the church and keep it adorned with flowers, especially Iris Acheson, Heather Hunter, Sheena Harper, Maureen Dixon & Hazel McCullagh, and Alan and Michele Harper for their artistic skills at Harvest and Christmas. Also to Iris for keeping the fair linen beautifully laundered, one of those tasks that just happen seamlessly in the background.

- The Ladies who dust the church.
- Those who provide refreshments after church, and Michelle Harper, co-ordinator
- Those who cater for special occasions, Heather McCullagh, co-ordinator, Jill O'Neill
- Sandie Stirling, stewardship recorder
- Hazel Garrett, who administers the columbarium
- Charles Kinch, car parking attendant for funerals
- Officers and those who help to run all the parish organisations including (BB, Guides, Badminton Club, Tennis Club, Indoor Bowls Club, Table Tennis Club, Mothers' Union & Whist Drives
- Heather McCullagh & Alan and Michelle Harper for monthly Coffee Mornings and Movie Nights
- Lynn Boyle for the weekly Notice Sheet and Brendan Teeling for maintaining the website.
- Those who help run all the various events that make up our varied spiritual, social and fundraising calendar.

In this our 150th Anniversary year, we have much to give thanks for. We have also much to look forward to with a varied programme of concerts and events, the highlight of which will be the Flower Festival and Service of Thanksgiving in May. I urge you all to support and promote these events to ensure their success.

I conclude by thanking you all for your ongoing support, friendship and prayers. I thank God that he has seen fit to bring me to this wonderful parish, and pray that all of us together may build up his Kingdom in this place, to the honour and glory of his name.