

So here we are- another year, another Easter General Vestry meeting!

In addition to the formal business of this annual meeting it gives us a great chance to reflect on the year that is past with all its joys and sorrows, triumphs and challenges (I thought that was a nicer word than failures!) I have to say that we continue to be greatly blessed with wonderful facilities, a great team of people and a happy, vibrant parish.

All of you contribute to that in some way. A healthy parish is never just about a Rector or a small group of people- it is when everyone involved shares a God-centred vision of who we are and whose we are and pulls together to achieve it. I am constantly heartened by that lived experience and ethos which pervades practically everything we do. I also see it bearing fruit in the steady stream of new families which come through our doors, something which bodes well for the future of this parish at a time when many other parishes are lacking new members and fearful of what the future holds.

By the grace of God, I believe we can look to the future with confidence, but that said, it's always good to look at some intentional futureproofing in any parish. In practical terms that means spreading the load of leadership and involvement by encouraging and equipping more and more people to get involved- a more sustainable way of doing things. A few examples of this: we have recently introduced a new team of people to set up and deliver the various events which we run, resulting in a highly efficient and lightning fast set up for the Lenten Lunch- their first outing. It was a thing of beauty to behold! We also will be working to implement an infusion of new blood into the planning of the Autumn Fair to ensure its continued and long-term success. And at the start of the year, I handed back the duties of setting up the tables and turning on the boiler and dishwasher for the weekly refreshments after church to the pairs rostered on for that week, ensuring that there would be no issues on Sundays when I'm away. I would urge all able bodied parishioners to be willing to step up and contribute to the various call outs we issue from time to time- as well as getting things done it's a great way of getting to know new people. I also encourage everyone to sign up to and read the bi-weekly parish emails so you won't miss out on any of the news and events.

It is also very encouraging, and another sign of a healthy parish, to have two parishioners undergoing training as Diocesan Readers. We keep Ziva Newman in prayer as she approaches the end of her course, and Kris McCaffrey as he prepares to recommence his training in the Autumn.

This past year was a year of great joy and thanksgiving for me personally, with the 20th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood last June, the 10th anniversary of my institution as Rector of Clontarf last September, and most importantly of all, the birth of my first grandchild last October. I can never thank you, my Church family, enough for the way you all genuinely and generously celebrated all of these events with me.

Of course, every year that passes also brings its losses and griefs. Tonight we remember all from our parish who have died since our last Easter General Vestry Meeting:
Paul Macnaughton, Dermot Lawson and Melanie Glynn

We keep a few moments silence as we remember them before God...

As always, I want to take the opportunity tonight to thank all who contribute to the smooth running of our parish in so many ways. It's a long list so please bear with me, and I'll run through it as quickly as I can:

Trevor Garrett, who works tirelessly to ensure that both our church and Parish Centre are well maintained and clean, that our grounds are kept neat and tidy, and that our Centre users have what they need in place when they need it. Despite reducing his hours of work since last Summer he remains constantly at our beck and call and continues to do over and above what is asked or expected of him- a sincere thank you Trevor, from all of us. My thanks also to **Anthony Yeats**, our new part-time caretaker and cleaner in the Parish Centre.

Jonathan Boyle who manages most of the affairs of the Parish Centre, including liaising with the licensees, timetabling, correspondence, chasing down payments, and much more, all on a voluntary basis and while juggling a busy work, social and family life. We are still working on those reinforcements we promised you last year ;-)

Kris McCaffrey and Betty Hilliard our out-going church wardens for their commitment to their tasks and their vital ministry of welcome. Everyone and anyone coming through the doors of our church are guaranteed to be met with a cheery smile and a warm greeting, the value of which cannot be underestimated. Both Kris and Betty put in huge effort to get to know every parishioner's name and to make sure they all have what they need to feel welcome and relaxed as they worship.

Stephanie Maxwell, our wonderful organist, whose talent is matched only by her cooperative and supportive nature, and to her mum, Sandra, who usually steps in ably if Stephanie is unavailable.

Denis Henderson, Damien Peat, Ronan Kelly, Jennifer Kelly and Philip Godden, who take turns to act as wardens for the 8.30am Sunday service.

Trevor Knott and John Davis, our outgoing Glebe Wardens, for their work in keeping the Rectory and the Church Grounds in good condition.

Albert Adamson who organises the readers rota every week and carries out the monthly parish lodgements- both duties done with dedication and diligence.

Nadine Watters, who continues to serve diligently and expertly as our honorary treasurer, including keeping us up to speed with the increasingly onerous requirements of charities governance.

Sandie Stirling, who lodges and keeps track of the donations made in the church envelopes and organises the tax reclaims on all eligible donations- a vital extra source of income for the parish.

Hazel Garrett who manages the columbarium and the associated paperwork and record keeping.

Rachel Rossney, our outgoing honorary secretary of the Select Vestry for taking the minutes, and for issuing notice of meetings.

The Youth Club leaders, **Kris McCaffrey, Karl Black and Karen Musaka** who help me run our monthly gathering for secondary school aged young people preparing for Confirmation. This year we also have the services of three excellent junior leaders, **Daniel Obikoya, Lucy O'Toole and Julia Rolston** which is an exciting development.

Elma Jackson, Derek Shaw and Helen Rosaldo who successfully got a monthly Sunday club up and running again. The numbers attending have increased well since Elma moved to Greenlanes NS as a teacher last September proving again the value of personal connection and invitation. Unfortunately, Helen Rosaldo has recently moved out of the parish, and I want to record our thanks to her for the many ways she supported youth and children's ministry over the years along with many other events- she will be missed but we wish her well in her new home. On a happier note, we have three new Sunday Club helpers coming on stream- **Sarah Cronin, Sinead Power and Chiara Nilsson**, along with **Vito Newman** as a junior leader, so the future looks bright.

Jill O'Neill, Carole Walsh and Rhoda McConnell for running the hugely successful monthly Coffee and Chat mornings- a really great initiative of the last twelve months.

Yvonne Reid who runs the monthly parish whist drives.

The members of the **Parish Needs Group** and the newly formed **Events Logistics Team** who plan, organise, deliver and review the many events run so well in the parish

Brendan Teeling, our webmaster, for keeping our website and Twitter account up to date.

Arthur Parkinson and Michelle Kelly, our Safeguarding Trust panel members who are working with me to ensure full compliance with safeguarding requirements.

Iris Acheson, who has kept the church linens laundered for many years, and to her and the other ladies who help with the church flowers and decorating for the main festivals like Christmas, Easter and Harvest.

Shirley Davis our longest serving Minister of the Eucharist.

The organising committee of the Autumn Fair, **Clive Jackson, Jonathan Boyle, John Patten Rachel Rossney and Matthew Cronin**, and all whose trojan work over the weekend of the Fair makes it possible.

Audrey Doolan, our coordinator and all who take turns in providing and serving the refreshments after church each Sunday: another very valuable component of our ministry of hospitality.

The members of the outgoing **Select Vestry** for keeping on top of all things relating to parish fabric, furniture and finance.

All the volunteers on the church dusting rota and **Sandra Maxwell** who coordinates it, and those on the lesson reading rota who proclaim the scriptures for us week by week.

And last but not least, the members of our Parish Prayer Group who constantly keep me and the whole parish covered in prayer, and **Heather Walsh** who manages our healer prayer list.

I continue to thank God for you all and remain privileged to serve among you.

As I always say, we don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future, so we face it with confidence in God, the giver of all good gifts.

'Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen' (Eph.3:20-21).