



WICKLOW CHURCH OF IRELAND

Easter Vestry Report 2017



Congratulations to those that will represent the parish as members of the Select Vestry for 2017-18.

Office holders will be:

Rector's Churchwarden: *Miranda Harris*

People's Churchwarden: *Sanjay David*

Rector's Glebewarden: *VACANT*

People's Glebewarden: *Marc Devereux; David Gillanders (Hon Sec); John Clarke (Hon Tres); Mattanja de Boer; Jennifer Costello; Jim Costello; Stuart Daunt-Smyth; Norman Douglas; Sandra Dunne; Philip Hastie; Lesley Hopkins; Trevor Minion; Jonathon Patton.*

Thanks to outgoing members of the Vestry: *Andy Hasler and Michelle Waldron.*

Acts 2:37-47

The people who heard the Gospel message from the first disciples said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Rector's Address, 2017

I love the stories in Acts of the first believers. These were exciting days, if daunting, for the first followers of Jesus Christ. This was especially true for those who came to believe, after the ascension of Jesus into heaven. They never met him, but still encountered him and were compelled by him. They came to faith in Jesus, through the first disciples, who supported one another through the community they began to build – the church. Still today, people are compelled by Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and drawn to submit to God, the heavenly Father. Every week, we recite together an affirmation of faith – one of the Creeds, or a variation thereof. We either start by saying: “I believe”, or: “We believe”. But the word ‘belief’, has changed in its definition over time. The concept originally espoused by early Christians, was about commitment. To say: “I believe”, we understand this as being something which we are satisfied is factually correct. In an early Christian context, what we would actually be saying, is a little different. Certainly, ‘belief’, as we understand it is important – faith, is where we put our trust, to bring us to God. But, when we come together, and recite those ancient words, we are showing our *commitment* to God in Christ. In the verses from Acts 2, we see the model for the church, as we see how the early apostles lived. There are 4 elements. They gathered together, they read the scriptures, they prayed together, and they broke bread together. This is still the model for us for the church today. To be involved in the running of the church as an institution is essential – it provides the framework for the ministry, mission and Gospel outreach through which we seek to deepen our own relationship with God; and through which we seek to bring others to know him too. We need to engage with the Bible, as it is our core source for knowing anything about God. It is a document of faith history, whose stories all point to the basic point: life with God is better than life without. Prayer is important, because it changes us. Prayer liberates our faith beyond any human construct of what might be ‘possible’, and allows God to be in charge. Prayer helps us retain a sense of perspective on life, ourselves, and the situations we face in daily living. We are a Eucharistic church – the primary act of worship is in Holy Communion, when we break bread together. Communion is something so simple, yet so profound. It is so personal, yet so public. When we gather around the Lord’s table, we remind ourselves, and communicate to others, that we constantly need God.

It is now almost 2 years since Rachael and I arrived in Wicklow. We are well settled, due in part to the welcome of parishioners, and delighted to be here. There is a sense of renewal throughout the whole town, I find, and within the parish. The early stages of ministry in a new place are always exciting, and a lot of hard work. The aim is to maintain that sense of excitement as we develop as a parish. Since the last Easter Vestry, the hard work has continued, as we work to realise the huge potential that exists within Wicklow. Naturally, there are challenges, but this is fine, as challenges often help us focus our minds more clearly.

Regards,

Jack Kinhead



Church Service

Over the past year, the number of people attending church has held reasonably steady. We try our best to provide services of worship that are accessible and engaging. We are a liturgical church, in that our services rest on a framework. However, we use liturgy in a dynamic way, using every resource available to facilitate our worship of the divine. We are extremely fortunate to have Klaas as our music director – an extremely talented organist and pianist. He is ably assisted by the worship band, who add so much to our worship when they play. We are also assisted by Shelagh, who coordinates the readers' rota. Mattanja de Boer and Jane Hastie write and lead the prayers of intercession at the main services of Holy Communion, as has Philip Hastie at times in the past. Twice a month, the Sunday Club runs, during the service. We now have 2 teams of teachers, and have split the classes. We also changed the format of Sunday Club, with the children going straight to class, joining the rest of the congregation after the sermon. This, hopefully, changes the message we send – the children are brought *in* to the service, rather than being sent *out*. Our thanks are due to Gail Fingleton, Louise Holmes, Rachael Kinkead, Lisa McPhillips, Denise Byrne, and Jane Hastie. We now also have a crèche, which is run in turn by the parents of about 8 families. This is to allow the parents of very young children to attend church services, without worrying about small children getting restless.

The main service of worship in the church is the lifeblood of our parish and community. Although there are many distractions, it is really important that people make the effort to attend church, and be fed, upheld, and supported in their faith. When there is a large congregation, the dynamic is different in the church. So please know this – when you can't make it to church, you are missed, in more ways than one.

After last year's Easter Vestry, we changed the time of the early celebration of Holy Communion, from 8am twice per month, to 9am every week. The congregation has increased significantly, and the change has been good.

The midweek service of Holy Communion continues on Wednesdays, at 1030, followed by coffee. It is a good opportunity to gather for prayer, and great that public worship is happening in the church during the week. I commend this service to anyone who is around during the day – even on an occasional basis.

During Advent, we ran a series of short, reflective services on Tuesday evenings. These were not as well attended as the previous year. More publicity will hopefully make a difference next time. There is an Alpha course running at the moment, in Jackie B's cafe. It is hoped that we can build on the spiritual life of the parish, by giving people the opportunity to explore issues of faith.

Messy Church ran 3 times during the year – at Harvest, Advent, and Lent. Once again, the numbers attending, and the engagement in interactive worship has been encouraging.

Regarding the great traditional festivals in the church's year, there were large congregations at the carol service, on Christmas Day and Easter Day.

There are 27 candidates in the confirmation class. Encouragingly, many of them were already regular / semi-regular churchgoers, which makes a huge difference to Ken and me as we run classes. The class led the entire service in Nun's Cross last Sunday, and did an exceptionally good job. We are hopeful that these candidates will remain part of the worshipping community of the church after the confirmation service.



Schools

We are fortunate to have within the parish quite a number of excellent centres of education. Two of them come under our control – the Glebe National School, and East Glendalough Secondary School. The links with both schools remain strong. I take part in school assembly in the Glebe School every Tuesday. Roughly once per month, the whole school comes over to the church, and each class takes it in turn to help plan and lead a short service. Sandra Bryan continues to run the school efficiently with the assistance of a first-rate staff. As chairperson of the Board of Management, Sandra makes life very easy for me.

EGS also continues to thrive under the excellent leadership of Craig Petrie and Viv Weir. The Board of Management is chaired by Geoffrey Perrin, in an efficient and professional manner. EGS continue to value the link with Wicklow Parish, as we value the link with them. Craig couldn't be more helpful in offering us the use of school facilities for the use of our youth clubs. I take part in assemblies here about 2 / 3 times per term. Dirk and Ollie Van de Flier and myself, along with David and Tricia Howell (of Redcross Parish) have helped lead a Youth Alpha course for TY students in EGS, which has been a particularly positive experience.



Youth

United Youth (4th-6th class) meet once per month, in EGS. A huge thanks to Fiona Bradshaw, Jonathon Patton and Carol Davies, who help run United Youth.

A new teen youth group has started in recent months. We meet twice per month, in EGS. So far, this has been successful, with around 12-20 young people attending. A huge thanks to Dalton and Penny Phillips, and Ciara Quinn, who help run this group.



Challenges

As already mentioned, there are so many activities that can draw us away from church life – particularly sports matches or training on Sunday mornings. So, I ask of people who are often occupied on Sunday mornings: Please include the church in the rota of the various activities you are involved in. During the season, please explain to coaches that you will occasionally miss practice, so you can attend church, which is as vital a part of life as physical activity. Please prioritise attending church when the season is over, or if training is cancelled for any reason.

Finance continues to be a slight issue, though the financial situation has improved hugely over the past year – more to follow in the treasurer's report.



Conclusion

Overall, this has been a good year in Wicklow parish. The parish is in a fairly healthy state, and any new parishioners who have joined in the past year have had a positive experience of welcome.

Work continues to improve and maintain the fabric of the church, and we are hopeful to make progress with the Rectory soon.

The role of the church in society has changed and continues to change. This is not negative, just different. But the Gospel we have is still the same, and its message is still simple: God loves you, want you to love him and your neighbour and to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly, with God. As we progress through 2017, we will endeavour to do just that.



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