

## EASTER VESTRY ADDRESS 2015

Good evening everyone and thank you for attending this Easter Vestry Meeting. I know such meetings are never considered the most exciting but they are important in the life of our parish and not least now that we are registered with the Charities Commission. I want to point out at this point some important changes re eligibility to serve on the Select Vestry due to Charities Legislation - anyone who has a voluntary credit agreement, is a bankrupt or have for any reason been barred from serving as a director of a company are no longer allowed to serve on a Select Vestry. I have to say to you this is the law of the land and not the law of the Church of Ireland and we have asked for clarity on this matter from central bodies. Having gotten that legal nicety out of the way this address can begin properly.

I would like to begin this address by saying thank you to a series of people for their work over the past year. If I omit someone I apologise and the oversight is unintentional.

Jack Blair - I want to personally thank Jack for his continued support and help in the parish. Many of you see his work only on a Sunday morning when he is leading services but I know and greatly value the unseen pastoral work that he does in the parish. I know on Sunday morning he has a gift for spotting new people and going and making them very welcome. I also value greatly that there are times when he takes on a pastoral situation and quietly brings God's blessing to those people. I also appreciate his faithfulness each Wednesday evening in teaching God's Word. I know the amount of time and work that goes in to preparing such a bible study. Thank you Jack.

Select Vestry - thank you for the hard work over the past year and the commitment to seeing God's kingdom grow in this place. I am not sure we as a church really appreciate the amount of work that a SV actually does in a year. With more and more legislation coming to impact on us the SV have had to ensure that we comply with Health and Safety Legislation, Safeguarding Trust Legislation, Food Hygiene Legislation, Disability Access Legislation but to name a few. Thank you to the SV for making sure we comply and are able to use this building in safety and security.

Drew - thank you for the vast amount of work that you do on our behalf with the accounts and for the clear presentation each month to the SV of those accounts. Thank you also for steering us through the programme for upgrading this building and the rectory.

Fiona - thank you to Fiona for all the work as our Parish Secretary, not least for keeping the diary as to who is using the building up to date. Thank you.

Shirley Moffett - if you drive past after 3.30pm most afternoons you will see a car parked outside - it will most likely be Shirley in here cleaning the building. I am not sure we all appreciate just how much work she puts in to keep this place clean and tidy. It is a service that is unseen by many, but not unseen by God and it is an important ministry which we are thankful for and we say that publicly this evening.

Flowers - Hazel and Sandra - thank you for carrying that burden over the past year and for all who on occasions have also helped. Sandra relinquished that role at the end of last year - thank you for the many years of faithful service. I know Hazel would appreciate any help that was offered.

Bill Lunny - again one of the works around the outside of the building which goes unseen by many and maybe if we took the time in Spring and the Summer we would appreciate the variety of flowers etc. I know each autumn I for one appreciate the pears and the Victoria plums.

BB - I want to thank Gillian Armstrong for stepping in and seeing the BB through the transition after Drew stepped down. It lifted a burden and enabled the company to continue to build and grow. Colin Watson is coming to the end of his first year as Captain and we look forward to the parents evening in a few weeks. The good news is that Colin is continuing!

GB - I want to thank Sandra Montgomery for seeing the GB through it's transition period and to Sarah Bell, (nee Nelson) for taking on the captaincy. We had the parents night last night and it was wonderful to see the hall filled with girls and parents enjoying the year's work.

Youth Club - it was with sadness that I accepted the decision of the youth club leaders that the club had to close, due to lack of leaders. I think we as a parish must thank God for the faithfulness of Maurice Dalzell and the many leaders over the 21 years that the club ran. They reached many thousands of young people who had no connection with Church and

they faithfully presented them with the claims of Christ. Eternity alone will fully tell the story of the value of that work and the seeds planted that bore fruit, in God's time, of lives changed and committed to Jesus.

Cafe - I think one of the successes in the past year has been the Cafe on a Thursday morning. To all those involved thank you. Those Thursday mornings that I have been able to call in the place has been buzzing with people and it is such a good example of how a little creative thinking and commitment has met a need and brought people in to fellowship with one another. If you have never been then do make a point of calling in some Thursday morning - you will be made most welcome and the food is delicious.

On that note - thank you to SEED for decorating the Kerr Room so appropriately and to the generous benefactors who enabled it to happen. A special thanks to Ashton Montgomery and Ryan Moffett for building the coffee bar and to Hannah Cairns for the artwork. Also to Ryan for the Scripture verses and words on the walls.

Music Ministry - I would like to thank Karen who stepped in and helped us during Louise's maternity leave. It really is too long a story to go into how God answered a '999' prayer in a matter of hours for Karen to come and help us. Thank you to all who provide music and lead us in singing God's praise each week. Thank you to those who operate the sound desk, the projection equipment, the choir, the music group, the ensembles when they participate. I want to say that if there was one lesson we all learned during Karen's time it was how much we undervalue Louise's music ministry amongst us. I can say to you as a people Sunday morning does not happen by accident and the amount of work that goes in to finding music, writing parts (which saves us quite literally thousands of pounds each year) is not to be underestimated. May I ask you to do the following:

Pray for Louise, the musicians and all who lead us with their voices in singing. If you are leading us in prayer in public worship I would ask if you are praying for the ministry team - that you include Louise in the list with Jack and I. I would ask that we see the praise of God as an important aspect of our daily lives like bible reading and prayer. The singing of God's praise is an activity of earth that we continue in heaven, please remember that.

Sunday Teams - to Colin McIlwaine for sorting out the rotas - thank you

Marjory Edgar - for sorting all the powerpoint each week and all who operate the laptop.

Chair Rota, Welcome Rota, Creche Rota

Anne - Tea rota

Mark Edgar - for setting up the projection equipment each week and for the magazine

Sound Desk - John Fittis and team

Wardens - Vic Wootton - who has been my warden for the past few years - thank you. Thank you for your faithfulness, your support and encouragement, the quiet manner in which you have gone about ensuring that all is ready for public worship each week. Thank you also for the words of encouragement and support at difficult times, especially in the past year when you had your own sorrow with the passing of your Mum. I am not sure other people realised your faithfulness in keeping everything in order here whilst also supporting your father and mother through her illness and through the days after her passing.

Sharon Piddock - Sharon thank you for all your hard work over the past year. thank you for ensuring I didn't forget to sign the preacher's book and again I want to thank you for being here faithfully week by week, even when it was obvious that you were in great pain and also through the difficult last year with your own parents.

Both Vic and Sharon have asked that they be allowed to step down this year from their roles as Wardens and for some other people to take on this important ministry at Holy Trinity.

Vision Team - can I thank all those who have been involved in the generation and presentation of the vision for Holy Trinity. They have worked tirelessly behind the scenes in arranging the information gathering evenings, the collating and analysing of all that information. The formation of vision plan and tentatively taken steps to implement what we believe is God's plan and will for Holy Trinity. Some simple things such as the banners, the signs inside actually take a long time to prepare and make. Ryan has been a real gift to us in using his graphic designs skill to do that work and I know from seeing the cost of

such being done for the Diocese he has saved us many thousands of pounds. I know as well that the reason for his service in this area is for the glory of God and he will be embarrassed by me even mentioning him this evening but it is good for us all to be aware of the gifts of talent that people use for God's glory in our church family.

I think it has been a successful beginning in the past year. From the moment that we had the Service of Healing we have progressed as a parish and as a people. We have started small but I think the recent information Sunday helped us to get a perspective on just some of the things that we actually do as a parish. The work in Woodburn PS with the after schools team has been a great blessing to the school and to the people involved. Messy Church - has been Messy but it has brought people in who are on the fringes of our congregation and those who have never been to church before. However, in the year ahead I want us to move it to an afternoon slot and see it not as an alternative to our morning worship but as a means (which is its actual purpose) of reaching those who never come and have no contact with Church or the gospel. Having said that, remember to put your clocks forward on Saturday evening and be here at 9.45am.

The new parish visiting team will begin after Easter. They are not replacing me in visiting people but making more regular contact with people who are housebound or maybe have drifted for one reason or another.

Can I say one more thank you before turning our eyes and thoughts to the future. Thank you to the team of people who came and painted the building last year. It quite literally saved us thousands of pounds and transformed the outside of the building.

There are bound to be some people I have omitted and I apologise for that. As I said at the beginning it is not an intentional oversight or snub.

A new sound and projector system - the Select Vestry are presently looking at tenders for this and we are awaiting a detailed breakdown of what we will be getting and if it meets our present and future needs. It is with joy that I tell you that we have the money to go ahead with this venture - through the generosity of you all. We have also been given a gift to purchase some staging which again will help us not only on a Sunday morning but also during other events. Again thank you to the generosity of people we have money to purchase this.

## The Future

I want now to turn our focus and eyes to the future. If you have been at my bible study over the past year the one verse you will have heard mentioned in relation to Genesis over and over again is Genesis 50.20. Allow me to quote it to you. The context is Joseph speaking to his brothers after their father, Jacob, has died and as they are now fearing for their lives. You know the story - they had sold him into slavery in Egypt and many years later during a famine he rescues them from starvation. I want us to take this verse for the year ahead and to allow it to penetrate our souls, our thinking and our lives. There is no getting away from the fact that sometimes life is difficult, stressful and hard. There is no getting away from the fact that sometimes in life people do or say things, even in the Christian Church, that are hurtful, cause us untold suffering and make our lives difficult. There is no getting away from the fact that sometimes life is difficult for the Church, for Holy Trinity, and some things seem to be evil and yet this verse tells us that God uses it for our good and His greater glory. I want to lay some challenges before you for the next 12 months, based on the past experience of this congregation and on the faithfulness of God.

Over the past year the vision team have organised several different events and on the whole they have been reasonably well supported. However, it is disappointing to see people not supporting events or being generally negative about them. There is no sense being circumspect about it - there are times that people seem to want to be negative about events and there are times when people are unwilling to move outside their comfort zones to participate in the life of this congregation. I have to say to you that neither of those are in keeping with Scripture or God's will for Holy Trinity. If, as we claim, we follow Christ then surely His example is our example. Philippians 2 tells me that He left the glory of heaven to come to earth and humbled himself in obedience to the will of the Father to death on the Cross for my salvation. Following that example then I, you, we are called to set aside our goals, our priorities and our comforts and to humbly obey the will of the Father - revealed in Scripture.

Too often we participate only in that which is comfortable to us. Too often we will not attend Sunday worship because it is not to our liking. Too often we will not participate in an event because we cannot be bothered or we see it as not for us. All too often we leave it to others to do the inviting etc. I want you to prayerfully consider that over the next few

months in the light of Scripture and in light of the example of Joseph and more importantly Christ. Yes, some things will not be to our liking or our taste but it is for the glory of God and the winning of souls for Christ that we exist, not our comfort. We need everyone on board - as the hymn writer wrote "There is a work for God that only you can do!" Only Joseph could save his family from starvation - but to do so he had to go through quite a harrowing experience in Egypt - yet in Genesis 50.20 he had learned and understood the unseen hand of God in his life. There have been many things over the past years in Holy Trinity which were painful, which caused suffering, which we would not have chosen to walk through and yet - Genesis 50.20 - has always come to the fore in my heart and understanding. It is God's glory that is first and foremost our concern. Romans 8.28 - All things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose - not my purpose or comfort, our yours - His purpose. Remember that.

A Bible in their Hands - a challenge to bring your own bible to church with you on a Sunday morning. It sets such a good example to others, especially the children. We say we want to hear God speak but we do not bring the means by which He speaks! You can say the first line of our vision statement but is it actually true for you? I have also to say there are a faithful few who turn up for bible study each week! I know we have many monthly groups but I truly believe coming together as a family to study the Word of God is key to our spiritual health and growth.

#### A Saviour in their Heart - A Purpose in their Lives

So in the year ahead, as I mentioned on Sunday - I want us to set a challenge to grow the congregation by 20 more people - that is not a lot but a modest target. I want you to hear what I am saying - numerical growth is not the objective - the objective is to increase our points of contact so that we can introduce them to the Gospel.

Holy Week 2016 - Gospel Mission Week with Mission Carrick. Challenge - begin now praying for and planning to build a relationship with at least one person, non-christian, who you can invite to hear the Gospel that week. It is a year ahead - a year of prayer and intentional relationship building with evangelism in mind. At the beginning of 2016 we will, God willing, with the other churches of Mission Carrick be running a training course in giving people confidence in their faith and confidence to share their faith as a lead into

the week of mission. I pray we all get involved and see God work in a mighty and marvellous way in our town during that time.

Seek in the next year to invite at least once every two months someone to come to Church or to one of the many social events that the vision team will be organising over the next year. To do this you will need to tell people that you actually go to Church on a Sunday and you will need to attend an event yourself - so there is maybe the first challenge for you.

Fields of Life - the Water Well - Drew introduced this to you on Sunday morning. Please get involved. Remember the words of Christ in Matthew 25 - I was thirsty and you gave me water to drink...when did we do this?...when you did it for the least of one of these! I do not think there is a greater reason for getting involved here.

Crosslinks - if you can remember back to our recent information Sunday morning - which was a real blessing and an eyeopener to many as to what goes on with our youth ministry here. We had Val Ellis introduce us to our new link missionaries - Josh and Ye Ling. I am delighted to announce that they will be with us on Sunday 5th July this year. It would be lovely to not only have them here with us that morning to worship but if we could have a lunch as a church family here with them so that in a more informal setting we could get to know them. Again get involved, not least by praying for these people in their work.

Last challenge, and by saying this I am not giving you an opt out clause - not everyone will succeed in this - but you must at least try and if you fail, you fail. Seek to find at least one person that you can read the Bible with - once a week, or once a month in the year ahead. We need to recapture, believe and put into practice our belief that the Word of God is exactly that - The Word of God. It is powerful, it never returns empty but accomplishes exactly what God intends for it to accomplish. The Word of God applied by the Spirit of God to the souls of men transforms lives. It is not a therapy, it is not a counselling session nor is it a good luck or pick me up book - it is the Word of God. The Word of God tells us what God has done and what He promises to do - He is faithful to His promises. Again I remind you of the words of Jesus at His temptation - man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. If we are not reading the Word of God each day we are quite literally on hunger strike - we are starving our souls and we, this



church, this community, will be impoverished, weak and eventually spiritually die. It is quite literally, eternally, that serious to neglect the reading of Scripture. Therefore, I humbly ask you to take up this challenge. You could for example begin by asking someone to read through just one gospel and go and purchase a copy of that gospel for them.

Finally - I want to thank you for the privilege of being the rector of Holy Trinity. It is not something I take for granted and I know I have been here a long time, maybe in some eyes too long, but this is where God has called me and I seek to serve Him as best I can. Where I have failed to do that I ask His and your forgiveness. In a book that the clergy of Mission Carrick have been reading together I read this, and it best sums up what I believe about my ministry here:

Here I shall stay as long as it pleases God; if it be his will, until I die. Look upon every child; your confirmands, every member of the congregation as if you will give account for every soul on the day of the Lord Jesus. Every day commit all these human souls from the worst and weakest hands, namely, your own, into the best and strongest hands. Then you will be able to carry on your ministry not only without care but also with joy overflowing and joyful hope.

Thank you to Janet and Taylor - who keep me sane, grounded and without whose love I simply could not survive. In closing - Christ alone is my Saviour, making Him known is the driving passion of my life. I do hope and pray that you see that in my life and my ministry. His glory, serving Him and bearing witness to Him is the reason I get up each morning and I pray that one day in glory I will, by His grace, see Him face to face. Amen.

