

As is customary, I want to begin my address with a number of thankyou's to people who have served the Parish over the last year. I thank the outgoing Church Wardens, Mr Aubrey McMurtry and Mrs Eileen Geaney. Last year, when no one came forward to take on these positions, they very generously undertook to serve a second year – for that I have been extremely grateful.

I would like to thank the outgoing Select Vestry for their continued commitment. This has been a busy year involving more meetings than usual, all of which have been well attended. The main issues that have taken our attention are the Rectory Project and our continuing ministry to our young people. I would like to thank two individuals for their particular ongoing contribution. I speak of Carolyn for her continuing service as Secretary of our Select Vestry and Tadhg for his services as Treasurer. This has been a particularly heavy year for Tadhg as he has sought to balance the different demands being made on the financial resources of the Parish.

In September 2005 the then Select Vestry asked Mr Denis Henderson to coordinate the Rectory Project. As anyone going along the Howth Road will now realise we have now reached the construction phase. Denis has written an article in the current issue of the Parish Magazine that outlines the stages we have gone through. I would want to take this opportunity to thank Denis for the huge commitment of time and energy he has brought to this project.

I will reserve my comments on our continuing ministry to our young people till the end of this address.

I would like to thank Randal Henly for his continued service as both Organist and Editor of the Parish Magazine. I would like to thank him and the choir for the lead they give us in our Sunday worship and also the work that goes into our special services at Harvest, Christmas and Easter. It is also good to see our Organ Scholars, Kate O'Neill and Ruth

Clinton developing in their own skills. Randal continues to put a great deal of energy into the production of the Parish Magazine. I would at the same time like to thank the team of helpers who assemble and distribute the magazine.

I want to pay a particular tribute to Louise Fuller and the Sunday School Team. As I said last year Louise has a passion for this work which has been maintained even in discouraging times. We are blessed in the number of children we have in the Parish and the parents who are keen to see their children involved in the life of the Parish. I am always encouraged by the numbers who come out to the Children's Nativity, the Family Service on Christmas Day as well as those who come out on Easter Day. We are seeking to develop the Family Service on the 2nd Sunday of the month.

I would also like to thank Mr Tom Stanley who has faithfully operated the Free Will Offering Scheme for several years. Tom has reached a point where he would like to stand down from this. I have mentioned this before and no one has come forward – please think again.

We have one new face on the block. Joan Kerr recently stood down as Parish Centre Administrator. I would like to thank Joan for all the work, most of it unseen and therefore unrecognised by many people, in this regard. Cathy Fennell has now taken up this position and I would like to thank Cathy for agreeing to do this and the work she has already put into this position. I would also like to thank Jane Caldwell for the quiet efficiency with which she maintains all the necessary supplies for the Parish Centre

For the last two years the Parish Fete has been under the very capable stewardship of Troy Hopkins, for which we are very grateful. Troy has now stepped down from this position and Mrs Helen McVeigh has kindly agreed to take over. (*ask her to stand up*) She kind of walked into the job – she was late for the DART and decided to step across the road to the

Gem to get something and walked into me. Helen, I am glad you were late for the DART even if you regret it at times!

An important aspect of our life is fellowship, whether in Church or out of Church. I would like to thank some people in particular. I would like to thank Dorothy MacCann for her continued work with the midweek coffee – this is a lovely opportunity for people to get together for worship and fellowship and chat over a cup of coffee. We are now serving coffee after Church every Sunday. This has been particularly appreciated by those new to the Parish, providing as it does a chance to meet and establish contact with people in a way you cannot do on your way out of the Church door. Thankyou to Valerie for coordinating this and to the ladies who have taken on the job of serving it each Sunday.

Since our last Easter General Vestry the Burrow Players has suspended its operations. I would like to thank the Burrow Players for all the entertainment they have provided down through the years and in particular I would like to thank Norman MacCann – I think it is a real shame that it has gone but in the absence of younger members it became increasingly difficult to find plays we could put on. Over the years they also provided valuable funds for the Parish. Norman continues to serve the parish in his continued service of the Parish Golfing Society, at the same time providing a very valuable contribution to the Parish Accounts.

Each Sunday as you come into Church, apart from Advent and Lent, you will see floral arrangements in the sanctuary. At Harvest, Christmas and Easter the flowers flow over into the main body of the Church. This does not happen by accident. I want to thank all who provide flowers in the Church, but I would want to pay particular thanks to Fiona Henderson for work in coordinating all this. Recently an appeal went out in the Parish Magazine and in Church for people to offer to do the flowers on particular Sundays in memory of loved ones – sadly there has been a rather disappointing take up on this suggestion.

I would like also to thank Mr Alistair Macmillan for his stewardship of the records of the Garden of Remembrance. Thanks to Dr Leslie Hopkins for his care of this in the past.

Every Parish is blessed with a group of people who do a lot of work behind the scenes. We are blessed to have Frank Macnamara, Eddie Kerr and Rob Macmillan who pick up on so many of those odd jobs that are part and parcel of Parish life.

Anyone who visits St Mary's will comment on the beauty of our grounds. I would like to thank two people in particular in this regard. Thanks are due to Troy Hopkins who coordinates a very willing band of helpers who come and cut the grass. Then there is Mary Downes who coordinates a group who assemble once a month for two hours on a Saturday morning to tidy up flower beds etc. There is a great atmosphere at this and Mary provides wonderful home baking and flasks of tea and coffee – the next group gathers on Saturday 19th.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful work done by our cleaner, Marita. She really is a gem and we are very fortunate to have her.

At the last two Easter General Vestries a number of issues were raised. I said at the time I would not take votes at the meeting but I would consult. This prompted the survey I conducted last September. It was intended to provide a snap shot of the age profile of our worshipping congregation, the worship preferences in terms of balance between Morning Prayer, Holy Communion and Family Service, the use of candles on the communion table and the healer prayer service. I also took the opportunity of establishing the willingness of different age groups to see changes in orders of service and music to encourage young people.

Our age profiles at our morning services are probably not very different to many other Church of Ireland congregations. A worrying aspect is the absence of anyone in the age

group 18-30. The survey showed that the present frequency of Communion Services should be maintained as should the use of candles on the communion table. I would just like to high light the response to the question regarding changes in music and orders of service to encourage young people. While the older age groups are, understandably, more evenly balanced on this one, the age group 31-55 show a 90 percent preference for this. This age group represents our parents of young children. But not only that but parents who are attending church and who want their children to be involved in Church. My own perception of this result is a plea to the Church at large to help us in keeping their children on board.

I would want to say that no-one is suggesting a radical shift in our worshipping tradition. I am a great believer in broadening our tradition rather than changing it. I think it is important that each section of the Parish feels that it has a place, that while we have our own particular preferences, we respect the preferences of others in the Parish.

With this in mind I want to spend a short time before I finish talking about the other issue that the Vestry has been considering this year, our ministry to young people. An increasing feature of ministry in the Church of Ireland has been the establishment of Youth Work on a more professional basis. This has arisen for a number of reasons. The changing nature of society, particularly the society in which our young people grow up and socialise has lead a growing number of Parishes of all traditions to recognise that there is a growing gap being established between young people and the Church. In the past it was always felt that they will be back when they have their own children. Experience of the Church both in England and in Northern Ireland indicate that this is happening less and less. Our age profile would suggest that we are not immune from this trend.

The Methodist Church in Sutton has had a Youth Worker on and off for several years and feel this has benefited their Church. The Church of Ireland Parishes of Clontarf and Malahide have both recently gone down this road. This Parish did contemplate such a

move in conjunction with neighbouring Parishes towards the end of Canon Hyland's time with you but the other Parishes for different reasons did not proceed. The Select Vestry held a number of meetings to discuss this, including meetings with representatives of Malahide and Clontarf. Both Parishes spoke of the benefits that the appointment had brought to them not only in engaging the young people themselves in the life of the Church but also re-engaging their parents. A group consisting of myself, Audrey Hamilton, Troy Hopkins, Eileen Geaney and Louise Fuller have also been in touch with the Diocesan Youth Office, 3Rock and other Parishes.

At a recent meeting the Select Vestry, having already agreed in principle to appoint a Youth Worker on a part time basis, considered the financial implications for the Parish. Tadhg has produced a financial proposal that shows that the Parish can support this project initially for three years. We have been fortunate to secure the services of Audrey Hamilton, with her extensive experience in the field of HR. Audrey has drawn up job specifications and draft contracts. The Vestry has appointed Audrey Hamilton, Louise Fuller and Troy Hopkins as a group to coordinate the recruitment procedure and line management of the successful candidate. The position will be advertised in the coming month and, subject to finding a suitable candidate, we would hope the individual would be in post in the autumn. Audrey has produced a leaflet which has been handed to you and would be delighted to answer any questions.

In the past twelve months I have conducted 11 Baptisms and 8 marriages (in addition to one in Krakow). I also conducted 8 funerals. This year we mourn the passing of Bill Sloane, Florence Wilkinson, Susan Collier, Doreen Lovegrove, Anna Handcock, Miriam Rowden, Christopher Cranny and Alfred Hutson.

I am pleased to announce that Mrs Shirley Moon has kindly agreed to act as my Church Warden for the coming year. For the last number of years Mrs Alison Allen has acted as Rector's Glebe Warden. In the light of her impending departure to Australia, Alison

indicated that she would like to stand down. I would like to thank her for her service to the Vestry and Parish. I am please to announce that Mr Ian Malcolm has kindly agreed to serve as Rector's Glebe Warden.