

At last year's Easter General Vestry I reflected on Archbishop Jackson's Enthronement sermon in which he addressed the changing environment in which the timeless truths of the Gospel are to be proclaimed in our own generation. He explored the idea of tradition as a living and developing phenomenon and change as not undertaken simply for the sake of change.

Later this month the Archbishop is bringing the clergy of the Diocese together for a Forum to discuss potential for Growth and Development at which the key note speaker will be Rev George Lings, director of the Church Army Research Unit and member of the House of Bishops' Working Party on Church Plants. This Forum is taking place in the context of the changing environment in which the Church is now operating. Talking to colleagues in other parishes and in other denominations, there is a common experience of declining numbers, absence of those in their teens, 20's and 30's. There has also been some interesting initiatives to address these issues. Over 20 years ago we saw the establishment of CORE, a new Church established within the family of the Diocese designed to reach out to those for whom the traditional Church structures and worship patterns did not speak. The Parish of Rathmines has in the last two years established a parallel congregation, sharing the same building but offering a different style of Church in the Rathmines area.

Here in St Mary's we have taken a number of initiatives to address these issues in our own context. For the past three years we have been fortunate to have benefitted from the services of our Youth Workers, initially Shaz Basdeo and for the last two years, Stephen Byford. During this time we have seen the establishment of two Youth Groups based here in St Mary's along with a group

shared with Sutton Methodist Church. Stephen has also explored the whole area of Youth Services on an occasional basis on a Sunday evening. In response to requests from parents we have also moved the age for Confirmation preparation to 6<sup>th</sup> Class in National School. This has by and large worked well.

The establishment of the Youth Project was made possible by the interest we received on the sale of half the rectory site which was held on deposit prior to the building of the new Rectory. This source of funding is now coming to an end and the Select Vestry have had to address the issue of our future strategy in our ministry to our young people. There was a unanimous view that we should continue but that this could only happen on a reduced scale. The Youth project team have drawn up a reduced job description, identifying core elements that have worked well. Stephen, after careful consideration, has indicated that this arrangement will not be a practical proposition for him and so he will be leaving at the end of May. In his two years with us Stephen has earned the affection and respect of our young people, the parent body and the wider Parish community and we thank him for all he has done and wish him well for the future. The revised position has been advertised and we would hope to interview candidates in late May. We have also benefitted from a significant anonymous contribution which will enable the Select Vestry to continue funding the Project on this reduced scale for a number of years.

Sunday School has continued to flourish under a collective leadership. We have been encouraged by the way numbers have been maintained right up to Easter. One feature this year has been the increased emphasis on participation

in worship. Classes have been held in the Parish Centre on two Sundays of the month. There has been the long established Family Service, but in addition there has been the introduction of the Family Eucharist. The purpose of this is two fold. One, it enables our Sunday School team to participate in the Communion Service and secondly it provides our young people with a bridge between the Family Service and our other choral services of Morning Prayer and Holy Communion. Initiatives such as this do take time to settle down. There was an issue at the beginning with noise but this has significantly improved. Some do miss the choral elements at this service but others have expressed an appreciation of the simpler style. I see this service as a work in progress as we seek to provide a range of services that meet the needs of the whole body of the parish. Last Sunday on Easter Day saw our two different styles of service, using the same readings and by and large the same sermon. There was the 9:30 service using the old communion liturgy and the 11:00 which drew a large congregation of all ages. Each for me were wonderful acts of worship and bear witness to the place of tradition and innovation in the worshipping life of the Church. Last year I spoke of an ongoing dialogue between the tradition we have inherited and the evolving situation in which we find ourselves called to witness to the Gospel in the time and place in which God has placed us. The truth is no one group owns the worship of this place so it is important that the liturgical preferences of the whole family of the Church are reflected in the monthly cycle of our worship.

For the last 8 years our Church has benefitted from the talent and enthusiasm of Fiona Henderson in her role of coordinating the floral decoration of the Church. Fiona has brought her mixture of her skill, her enthusiasm,

imagination all coupled with that ability to encourage and enthuse others. she is now standing down and we are seeking others to continue her work. Until that happens we may have to rely on artificial decorations. The best way we can thank Fiona for her work over these last 8 years is in ensuring that the work goes on.

As is customary, I want to thank a number of people who have served the Parish over the last year. I thank the outgoing Church Wardens, Mrs Irene Collier, who has served for two years as Rector's Church Warden, and Mrs Finola Young, who has served as People's Church Warden, a position she has filled this position for two years.

I would like to thank the outgoing Select Vestry for their continued commitment. I would like to thank two individuals for their particular ongoing contribution. I speak of Audrey as she comes to the end of her first year as Secretary of our Select Vestry and Tadhg in his continuing stewardship of our finances as Treasurer. In the midst of very heavy professional commitments Tadhg has continued to provide very clear and professional advice as we have sought to steer ourselves through these troubled financial times.

This year our Glebe Wardens, Frank Macnamara and Eddie Kerr have continued in their work as Glebe Wardens. This is one of those unseen jobs that is all too easily taken for granted – we notice when things are not done but when all is looking well we fail to recognise the amount of work that is done behind the scenes with great willingness and cheerfulness. Thank you gentlemen.

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. 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 have already spoken of the work of the Sunday School Team and of the contribution of Stephen our Youth Worker. I would want to pay particular tribute to Louise Fuller in the work she has done in coordinating the work of the Youth Project Team, consisting of herself along with Troy Hopkins and Audrey Hamilton. There has been a great deal of work in the background in ensuring that our Youth Project is able to continue. Louise has also been responsible for the establishment and running of our Parent and Toddler Group which meets every Thursday from 9:30 till 12 and there is also a lovely atmosphere in the Joshua Room.

At the other end of the age spectrum, our very successful Social Group continues to meet on alternate Tuesday afternoons. One Tuesday a month the activities are based here in the Parish Centre and on the other Tuesday the group have organised a trip. Barbara Sargent has been very active in the establishment and the running of this group. We are now moving towards a more collective leadership in which individuals take on the role of organising particular out door events.

We would like to thank Mr Denis Headon for his stewardship of the Free Will Offering Envelopes – he is always ready to respond to requests for new sets of envelopes

I would like to thank Cathy Fennell for her continued work in managing our Parish Centre. She has been very proactive in securing tenants so we have maintained our income from bookings. 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 four years the Parish Fete has been under the very capable stewardship of Mrs Helen McVeigh and she has kindly agreed to take responsibility for it this year. Helen has been under a great deal of pressure of late due to the recent death of her father in England and I would appeal to folk to be even more willing to step up to the mark as the Fete approaches

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. The coffee after Church each Sunday 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. Thank you to Valerie for coordinating this and to the ladies who have taken on the job of serving it each Sunday. On the

odd Sunday we have missed it due to the absence of volunteers, which I think has brought home to us how valuable this meeting after Church has become.

Our thanks are also due to Mr Stan McMullen for his continued work as distributor of the Church Review and to Eddie Kerr, who continues to look after the Church of Ireland Gazette. Both would welcome new subscribers.

This year I performed        Baptisms and  
I officiated at        weddings.

This year I conducted the following funerals:

Harry Brooks, Irene Trimble, Joan Pickard, Orla Ennis, Shelagh Wilkinson.

I am pleased to announce that Mr Aubrey Mcmurtry has agreed to act as Rector's Church Warden for the coming year and that Mr Eddie Kerr has kindly agreed to continue as Rector's Glebe Warden