

June has always been a good time of year for 6th class in the Burrow and other National Schools in the area. The Burrow has done a trip to the Gaeltacht, there has been the end of year service here in Church, the 6th class show, the dance. And by now those preparing for Confirmation would have had their Confirmation Service.

You have been denied all that by the very necessary precautions put in place to protect us all from Covid 19. I just want to say that I think that our young people have been amazing. This has been a difficult time for you and I know that some of you have struggled.

This morning we are marking the end of our Confirmation classes. It has been a Confirmation Group like no other. We have been denied the face to face classes, the Pizza beforehand, the times we just went out to enjoy ourselves ice skating as well as the work we did together in the classes. Instead we met each week on Zoom – but at least we got the Bubble Football the other night. Now to be honest I did say to Elke that I wasn't sure how confirmation classes would work on Zoom. But then she said in her disarming German accent 'Why not?' She has been a massive help in identifying material, the Youth Alpha series, getting us using Mentimeter, Jamboard to enable interaction – and you came on board – it would n't have worked without you.

This morning our lesson from Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians tackles one of the issues that we looked at – 'What is Church?' Before the class we sent out a

question asking ‘What is the first word that comes to mind when you hear the word Church?’ This is the result that came back:

SLIDE

I’ve been doing Confirmation classes for 40 years and I always ask this question in one form or another – this was one of the few that made no mention of the building – the answers were around God, around worship, around community.

You are actually in very good company – I remember hearing the late Bishop Noel Willoughby saying in General Synod – ‘The Church is what is left when the buildings fall down.’

The Church is primarily its people. We are all the Church – in all our differences. What Paul is saying is that it is not just a matter of us all being different, in all our differences we are all important to the overall life of the Church. He takes us through the illustration of the body. If anyone thinks that Paul doesn’t have a sense of humour, take a look at this passage as he asks what would the Body be like if it was just made up of ears.

You are all special, you are all needed. As I have said to every Confirmation Group as I have rehearsed with them the Confirmation Service itself, I now say to you. You will always have a place in the Church. You may drift away – that’s OK, I didn’t go near the Church for years. But I promise you, you will always have a place in the Church. You may forget us but we will not forget you – and even more important, God will not forget you.

We'll be saying more at the end of this service, but in the context of what is Church, it has been a huge privilege to have worked with Elke. All through her time, she has returned to her underlying theme in everything she has done here; 'Fun, Fellowship, Faith.' – she has taught all of us a lot about being Church, reaching out to everyone, valuing everyone, encouraging everyone to play their part.