

**THE PARISH OF TEMPLEMORE
SAINT COLUMB'S CATHEDRAL**



MONDAY 8th APRIL 2024

THE DEAN'S ADDRESS

at The General Vestry

Saint Paul, writing to the Church in Corinth, uses the picture or analogy of a body and its different parts to explain to the members of the Church that every single member is important and has a part to play to ensure that the Church is what God intended it to be. If one part of the body breaks down or does not do as it should then the human body cannot function properly.

In the same way if one member of the Church thinks that he/she is not needed then the Church – and particularly at parish level – is limited in what it can do or achieve.

Sometimes, we see in the parish magazine a poster displaying in large letters the message **YOUR CATHEDRAL NEEDS YOU!**

These words are not meant to be a gimmick. They express a real truth and a sincere desire to involve **everyone** because everyone is an important and valued member of the body of the Church.

I hope and pray that the 549 people (192 families) who have been identified as **'parishioners' or 'accustomed members'** will always find a welcome at our door.

From a pastoral perspective, individuals and families avail of the services of the Church for the Rites of Baptism, Marriage and Burial.

In the year 2023, 7 children and 1 adult were baptised;
7 couples were married; and 13 people were buried.

Those who were baptised were:

**Freya Jackson, Rory Henderson, Tom Willingham,
Elizabeth Gourley, Scarlett Wray, Elliot Foster, Lilah Harding and Stephen Codd.**

Those who were married were:

Gordon Porter and Amy Rutherford;

Keith Thompson and Nicola Jackson;

Adam Mitchell and Katie Dobson;

Benjamin de Garis and Hannah Forster;

Scott Galbraith and Bethany Weir;

Gerard Wosser and Libby Bell;

Scott Mclaughlin and Natasha Fleck.

And those who died were:

**May Arthur, Ena Collins, Betty Gallagher, Nan Morrison, Margaret Plews, David Huey,
Albert Plews, Hazel Hamilton, Joan Hamilton, Percy Hamilton, Maisie Haslett,
Jean Pomeroy and Werner Scheel.**

Some of these names may be unfamiliar to some of you in that they did not belong to the Cathedral as daily and weekly attenders.

But I content myself in the belief that each of them was known to and loved by God and that should be what we all believe.

It is not every year that we can record that individuals and families join the church but during 2023 seven people (3 families) made a commitment to become members of this parish and for this we are most grateful.

In 2023, 6 members of the parish were confirmed by Bishop Andrew Forster on Sunday 11th June.

**Emma Bell, Olivia Brown, Scott Burns, Mya Hamilton, Clark McClintock
and Nicky Baggley.**

This year, on the Feast Day of Saint Columba – Sunday 9th June –
5 young people and one adult will be confirmed.

**Ewan Copestake, Ellen Duffy, Sean Graydon,
Robbie Hamilton-Williamson, Freddie McIntosh and Wendy Jackson.**

Please pray for them and for those who will prepare them for this important milestone in their lives.

I wish this evening to record my thanks (and yours) to churchwardens **Morris Forbes
and Muriel Hamilton.**

They have served well and have given good and loyal service to this parish.

For various reasons Morris has been unable to accept my invitation to continue as Rector's Churchwarden.

I wish to thank you for your support and friendship during the past year.

I thank **Muriel Hamilton** who has held the office of People's Churchwarden for many years and who probably knows the Cathedral and its services better than most people.

In my Address last year I spoke about the Dean's Verger, **Raymond Nesbitt**, and drew your attention to his health issues. Unfortunately those health issues have not disappeared and Raymond has been unable to attend worship and to fulfil his duties. I hope and pray that at some time in the future we will be able to welcome Raymond back amongst us.

The maintenance of old buildings can be a time-consuming and expensive exercise, and this past year has seen quite a number of jobs undertaken in the Cathedral and adjoining buildings.

I thank the glebewardens **Charlie Ferguson and William Lynn, assisted by Brian Doherty and Maurice Brown.**

Always at hand is **Robert McGonigle** and our own architect **Karl Pederson** who offers advice and encouragement.

Even when we are mindful that it is better to inspect our buildings regularly rather than have to spend time and money later seeking remedies, problems do appear.

This past year has seen remedial work carried out on the roof of the Cathedral, on the lighting and on the sound system.

Cathedral House and the Deanery Roof also required attention.

Situated as they are in the public thoroughfare the Cathedral grounds must always be kept in good shape and we are most grateful to our Groundsman **John Hetherington** who keeps the grounds so beautifully. He also is willing to help in so many other ways and for all of this we say 'Thank You'.

Thank you, also, to the small band of parishioners who have developed the Bee Friendly Garden, planted daffodils, and helped to make the Cathedral Grounds more eco-friendly.

Our sidespersons – **Garth Doherty, Charlie Ferguson, Maurice Brown and Graham Hunter** – gave helpful assistance as and when needed.

I thank the members of the **Select Vestry** for their support and co-operation during the year and as I have often said your attendance at meetings have been excellent and your decisions have always been positive and constructive.

Earlier this year the Secretary, **Ray Mace**, indicated that she wished to resign from that role. We accepted her decision with respect and thanked her for the years that she had served so capably.

Over the past while **Jacqui Armstrong** has been fulfilling this role and we thank her for doing so very efficiently.

Louis Fields has continued to be a good Treasurer, guiding us through some difficult times and challenging us in the prudent use of our financial resources.

Alan Thompson, as Assistant Treasurer and **Muriel Hamilton**, who looks after all Donations and Thankofferings, also deserve our thanks and appreciation for the part that they play in the financial side of parish life.

Worship in the Cathedral is our first priority and while we think of Sunday worship we should never forget that prayer is offered in this building on weekdays too.

I am grateful to **David Bell** who assists me during the week by reading the Daily Office on Thursday and Friday morning, and to **Canon John Merrick** who celebrates Holy Communion on Tuesday morning.

Heather Fielding continues to assist at some of the major festivals of the Church.

Jacqui Armstrong and Simon McGonigle complete the Worship Team and we value their participation at services each month.

I wish to add my personal thanks to **Canon John Merrick** for his assistance at services and for his pastoral visitations to hospital and care homes and to individuals who appreciate his ministry to them.

The work of the **Sunday School**, under the supervision of **Irene Hewitt** and her team of teachers and helpers, has been much more than telling Bible stories to the boys and girls. Sunday School shares Christian values and encourages young people to adopt and practice Christian principles in their lives.

Last year the initiative '**Adopt a Grandparent**' caught the attention of many people – not least the organisers of the MindMatters Conference that was held in Dublin in October. Irene Hewitt was invited to give a presentation on the Adopt a Grandparent project and it was very well received by the participants. This year, extra funding for this project was received from the Church of Ireland Priorities Fund and this will enable more parishioners to be visited and supported by the teachers and young people. In relation to the Sunday School we noted, with great delight, in June of last year the appointment of one of our younger teachers – **Katie Hewitt** – as Head Girl of Lisneal College.

Bellringing (or to give it its official name 'Campanology') is an aspect of Cathedral life that should not be overlooked.

For seventy-five years **Aubrey Fielding** played a major role here.

He joined the team of bell ringers in 1948 and up until a short time before his death was still ringing the bells.

Aubrey was also actively involved as a member of the Cathedral Choir for almost 73 years. He gave sterling service also as a Parish Reader. His involvement with the Cathedral lasted a lifetime and I'm sure it will never be surpassed.

It is good to record that his legacy of bellringing is continuing under the guidance of Garth Doherty and his team.

To re-phrase the words of a well-known song, '**Let the bells ring out for Sunday, for weddings, for festive occasions such as Christmas and Easter – let the bells ring out**'.

The work of **The Templemore Branch of The Mothers' Union** and of **The Men's Society** continued during the year.

Speakers were invited to the meetings and the subjects were diverse and interesting.

Some of the men folk have been attending meetings of **The Men's Club** that is affiliated to First Derry Presbyterian Church. And this has resulted in new friendships being formed with men from other churches in the City and surrounding area.

Thank you to the Chairpersons, Secretaries and Treasurers – as well as to those who support the monthly meetings – for the efficient way in which these organisations are run.

Safeguarding Trust issues are now a regular item on the agenda of the Select Vestry each month. I thank **Elizabeth Fielding and Malcolm Hewitt** for the enormous amount of work that they do behind the scenes. **The Safeguarding Trust Audit** was held at the end of June and we were considered to have had a 'Diamond Quality' audit. An audit will be held every three years. In the meantime work continues to keep our children and helpers and volunteers safe.

Elizabeth has submitted a Parish Safeguarding Trust Panel Report and this will be presented to the meeting later this evening.

During the year 2023, in addition to the daily and weekly services, the Cathedral hosted some major civic and diocesan services.

These included **A Service of Remembrance, Thanksgiving and Reflection for those who died during the COVID-19 pandemic;**

The Installation of The Reverend David McBeth as a Canon;

The Service to mark the Coronation of their Majesties

King Charles III and Queen Camilla;

The Ordination of Deacons, Brian Robinson and Sean McClafferty, to Ordained Local Ministry;

And the Joint Emergency Services Northwest Community Carol Service.

All of these services required attention to detail and with the assistance of our Parish Secretary excellent Orders of Service were prepared and printed.

It was a real joy to welcome so many people from the City and the wider community to share with us on these important occasions.

The Cathedral Youth Club, nestling in the skyline of Saint Columb's Cathedral, has – as recent information in the Cathedral magazine shows – a busy and varied life. Managed by Jeanette Warke and her staff and volunteers, it serves a useful purpose and accommodates the needs of young and old in the Fountain area. Although the past year has not been kind to Jeanette she soldiers on, always wanting to give of her best as she has been doing for over fifty years.

Last year we reported on the prospect of new tenants for the **Cathedral Schools**. **In Your Space Circus** ticked all of the relevant boxes. We liked them and they liked us, and a positive relationship has developed. In the very near future a lease will be signed handing over the use of the building to our new tenants – but still allowing the Cathedral certain rights to the building.

Another great institution, nestling in the skyline of Saint Columb's Cathedral, is **Fountain Primary School**. 2023 marked the retirement of Mrs Cathy Arthur, Principal since 2011, and the appointment of **Mr Stephen Torney** as the new Principal. Stephen is no stranger to either the pupils or to the members of Staff. A teacher at the school for the past eight years, he brings a deep knowledge of the school and its location to his work.

He is building on the work of his predecessors and has made School Assembly a priority every Wednesday afternoon.

The clergy of the local churches are invited to talk to the children about a Bible story. Stephen has also re-introduced the gathering together of pupils, parents, teachers and clergy in one of the local churches at festival times of the year (Christmas, Easter and Harvest) and we are glad to be associated with this initiative.

Stephen was a Cathedral Chorister 30 years ago.

The Board of Governors of Fountain Primary School is chaired by our own **William Lynn** and two of our parishioners, **Mrs Heather Graydon and Miss Melissa Duddy** are members of the Teaching Staff, while another parishioner, **Mrs Donna Best**, retired after 22 years from her role as Lollipop Lady.

Over the past twelve months 3 events have stood out for me as of special significance. Each of them in their own way has ensured that the Cathedral is seen to be a place of welcome, friendship, openness, acceptance and inclusiveness.

Ministry to Visitors and Tourists was very successful and I pay tribute to the willing band of volunteer tourist guides who, under the direction of Bobby Sloane, welcomed a record number of people through the doors from April to September.

During 2023, **21,000** people entered the Cathedral: 15,500 people as Summer Visitors and 5,500 during the Christmas Tree Festival.

This was almost 13,000 more than in 2022.

Each of our volunteers has contributed to the Visitor Experience and brought his and her own personality and knowledge of the building into play.

The recent re-organising of the Vestibule and the upgrading of the furniture will, hopefully, make life a little bit easier for our band of volunteer tourist guides and will also allow our visitors to view the information in a more user-friendly way.

Harvest Sunday, 1st October, saw the Cathedral transformed as we welcomed home many individuals who now reside in other parts of the country. But they wanted to '**come home**' for this special occasion.

Thank you to the members of **The Events Working Group** for all of the preparatory work to ensure that this event was both successful and enjoyable, and judging by the positive and encouraging comments that we received many people would like to see such an event repeated.

The Events Working Group is small in number but is large in ideas and has the Cathedral very much in mind in everything that it plans.

Last year, its major event was **The Christmas Tree Festival** that ran from the middle of November until the end of December past.

Many months were spent planning for this major fund-raising event and while there were many sleepless nights and times of uncertainty it is good to be able to report that a very successful and enjoyable event was held.

People from many parts of this City and beyond entered our doors, some for the first time, and everyone spoke very highly of what they saw and experienced.

I thank everyone who participated and who showcased the Cathedral in a wonderful way.

Meeting and welcoming people from different parts of this country and indeed from many parts of the world was a significant part of the Festival, but we cannot forget that there was an important financial aspect to it as well.

From a financial aspect the final total was **£17,150** before expenses, and very recently a small group from the EWG was able to present a cheque for £2,000 – from the proceeds of the Festival – to Foyle Foodbank.

In the Autumn of last year I was invited to share my experiences of ministry with a second year theological student. Having done so in 2018 with Rodney Magennis I accepted the challenge and welcomed **James Shiels** to the parish for ten weeks.

He took an active part in all of the services and I tried to introduce him to a diverse group of people and situations.

I know that he enjoyed his ten weeks with us and I hope that he learned something about ministry in a Cathedral parish that will help him as he continues his studies in The Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

Earlier this year I was approached by another theological student who wishes me to offer assistance as he works on his dissertation entitled '**Blessings or Burdens? Analysing the Challenges and Opportunities of Cathedrals in the Contemporary Church of Ireland**'.

Some of you may have the opportunity to meet him during the Summer and to answer some of his questions.

I know that in past years the Cathedral was a place of contact where theological students gained experience in worship and pastoral work and I am keen to see this relationship continue in future years. It is not just about what we can give to future clergy but we can also learn from their perspectives.

Music plays a significant part in the life of Saint Columb's Cathedral and I record our thanks to **Dr Derek Collins** and to **Nicky Morton** who contribute so much to all of our choirs.

We can be very proud of the fact that we have four choirs in this parish – The Cathedral Choristers, The Gentlemen of the Cathedral Choir, The Cathedral Chamber Choir and The Cathedral Girls' Choir.

Each plays a meaningful role in the worship life of this Cathedral. Over the past year we have seen the girls gain in confidence and individual members taking a more active part in the services.

Just a few weeks ago it was a genuine pleasure to see members of the choirs perform in the Musical 'Oliver' in the Millennium Forum. They were excellent actors and singers and also were great ambassadors for the City and Cathedral.

Last year the **Lunchtime Recitals** on Thursdays in July showcased the skills of the organists (Jack Wilson, Orly Watson, Nicky Morton and Henry Coop) and also the range of music that it is possible to perform on the Organ. Good numbers attended each week; a total of 300 attended over the four Thursdays and over £1000 was received in donations. It is hoped that it will be possible to continue this outreach again this year.

During October and November 2023 we welcomed a number of organists and choirs who sang the services and brought a fresh approach to our worship.

They were **The Choir of Agherton Parish, Portstewart, Cantemus Choir from Coleraine and The Choir of Saint Polycarp's Church, Belfast.**

We would also record our congratulations to former parishioner, chorister and gentleman of the Cathedral Choir **Ben McGonigle** who, at the beginning of this year, was appointed Musical Director of Cantemus Choir.

Another former Cathedral chorister, **Jack Wilson**, made the news last year when he was appointed Master of Music at St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast. His many friends here in Londonderry were so saddened when we heard of his recent illness. We continue to pray that he will make a full recovery.

St Columb's School of Music, on our doorstep, contributes in its own way to Cathedral life. We are pleased to be able to facilitate the large numbers of students and tutors when the talents of the students are showcased for a week in June.

The Ulster Project is another avenue in which the skills and abilities of young people in this City are utilised.

The work in which **Malcolm and Irene Hewitt** have been involved for many years continues – and we are delighted that, last year, one of the Gentlemen of the Choir **Dylan Harvey** was selected as one of the Ulster Project Team leaders. This year three of our young people – Sam, Elliot and Joseph – are preparing for the trip of a lifetime to America.

I have left a Thank You to two people until the end of my Address.

Those people are **Robert and Linda McGonigle**.

Robert is Parish Administrator and Linda is Parish Secretary.

I work closely with them on most Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Parish Office and can see at first hand the work that they do.

I know that I would find it extremely difficult – if not impossible – if I didn't have them at my side. Both fulfil an important role in the parish and I hope that they will continue in these roles for many years to come.

An area of parish life that continues to appeal to people at home and abroad is the **live-streaming of services**. In spite of some criticisms we re-introduced live-streaming some time ago and those who watch the services regularly comment very favourably on them. We also live-stream occasions such as funerals so that family members and friends who are unable to attend in person can feel part of the services.

For all of this we are most grateful to **Robert McGonigle, Janelle McClintock and, on occasions, Lucy McMackin**.

New recruits will always be welcome!

I close my Address on a personal note.

This is certainly not to be taken as an indication that I am planning to retire any time soon but **28th March** of this year marked seven years since I was instituted as Rector and installed as Dean.

28th April will mark twenty-five years since I was installed as a Canon of this Cathedral and **24th June** will mark 45 years since I was made a deacon in this Cathedral.

I enjoy what I do and I am grateful for the encouraging comments that I receive from time to time.

I am grateful to Almighty God who chose me and called me to this work, and I plan with His help to be with you for many years to come.

