

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



**TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2023**

**THE DEAN'S ADDRESS**  
**at the General Vestry**



The Dean's Address at the meeting of the General Vestry should include something old and something new. It should be a reflection of what took place in the year under review and it should point the way forward with hope for the future.

I have been reading (or re-reading) the Address that I gave at last year's meeting of The General Vestry and one sentence has stood out for me.

It came towards the end of my Address.

**I like to refer to the Cathedral as a family, and in all families we try to support each other.**

This is where I begin this evening. Reminding us of those whom we welcomed into the Church of God in the Rite of Holy Baptism; those with whom we celebrated in the Rite of Holy Matrimony; and those whom we commended to Almighty God at the end of their earthly lives.

During the year 2022, fourteen children were baptised; five couples were married; and ten people were buried.

Those who were baptised were –

**Aurora Ambrose, Joseph Miller, Charlotte Lovell, Teddy Molloy, Carter Reid, Jack Hepburn, Sarah McLaughlin, Sienna Liddell, Heidi Harris, Robin Norris, Maisie Carson, Connie Rowney, Alec Reid and Persephone Baird.**

Those who were married were:

**Darren Dalzell and Catherine Gardiner;  
Adam Warnock and Rebecca Smyth;  
John Simpson and Rebecca Gull;  
Neill Fleming and Stefanie Armstrong;  
Kieran Paul Large and Jenna Dobson.**

Those who died were:

**Christine Edwards, Lexie Montgomery, Vicky Harper, Aimiee Moore, Martin Mace, Maureen Boal, Susan Hepburn, Mervyn McNair, Cecil Orr and Norman Sheppard.**

Some of these names will be familiar to you and you will be able to recall children and adults and their families clearly. Other names you may never have heard of and you will be unable to picture the children and adults and their families in your mind.

But all of them had at least one thing in common.

All of them found something in this Cathedral Church and Parish that prompted them to approach me or Canon John Merrick with the request that we would minister to them and their families pastorally.

They found us to be a welcoming, non-judgemental community; a church that is noted as a place of welcome, friendship, openness, acceptance and inclusiveness.

Sometimes, that attitude stands in our favour; at other times it can lead to our downfall.

Some individuals will appreciate our ministry and commit themselves to the parish; others will come in quickly and leave just as quickly and we never see them again until they require the ministry of the Church once again.

This is a part of the risk that we take when we open our doors and our facilities to the public. We stand convinced that the Spirit of God who is moving in this place will make what we do a positive through His love.

The death of **Miss Maureen Boal** on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2022 and the death of **The Very Reverend Cecil Orr** on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022 brought understandable sadness and grief to their immediate families, but also to this Cathedral Church and Parish. Maureen had been a member of this Parish all of her life (97 years) and Dean Cecil Orr, ordained in this Cathedral on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1957, had served as Rector and Dean for thirteen years (1984-1997).

I got to know Maureen when I was the Rector of The Parish of Castledawson. As you all know, Maureen and her sister Deirdre knew every coffee shop between here and Belfast; and on many occasions they would have stopped in Castledawson for a quick cuppa!

I had known Dean Cecil Orr for 43 years, meeting him for the first time on the eve of my Ordination when he was the Rector of The Parish of Maghera.

Maureen and Cecil both were faithful servants of God and both played a significant part in the life of this Cathedral Church.

We remember them fondly and thank God for every memory that we have of them.

Families are made up of people and the family that is The Parish of Templemore is made up of many people, all of whom play important roles in its life and witness.

Some of these people are front-line workers and I thank them for all that they do.

I wish this evening to pay a particular thank you to our churchwardens, **Ian Bartlett and Muriel Hamilton**. They have been a great team for many years and together have given sterling service to this parish.

This evening, I have to tell you that this partnership is coming to an end. For various reasons Ian has decided not to accept my invitation to continue as Rector's Churchwarden – a post that he has held for fifteen years.

I thank Ian for his friendship, counsel and support to me over the past six years, and I wish him better health and strength in the days to come.

I thank **Muriel Hamilton** who always goes beyond the call of duty and is immersed in the life of this Cathedral Church, often spending hours here when special services and events are being held.

We introduced sidespersons last year, and I thank **Charlie Ferguson, Morris Forbes, Maurice Brown and Garth Doherty** whose assistance has proved to have been beneficial.

I thank the members of the **Select Vestry** for their support and co-operation during the past year. Attendances at meetings have been excellent and the meetings have been positive and constructive.

Due to health issues and a personal bereavement **Ray Mace** has been less active as Secretary than in other years.

We wish Ray well for the future and are most grateful to **Jacqui Armstrong and Mildred Deans** who have carried out the duties of Minute Taker / Secretary with great confidence.

**Louis Fields** took on the mantle of Treasurer last year and he has guided us through another turbulent year with clarity and good judgement. It is encouraging to see that, while dark clouds still are present, the future is less bleak than it could have been.

We have been fortunate to have received some substantial monies in recent weeks that will help us to meet ever-recurring expenditure.

I, also, thank **Alan Thompson and Muriel Hamilton** who play a part in the financial side of parish life.

I, also, include in this section of my Address a personal 'Thank You' to the Dean's Verger, **Raymond Nesbitt**. Conscious of the fact that 2022 was not a good year for Raymond during which time he spent some weeks in hospital, and remembering the death, earlier this year, of his sister Cathy Davison – our prayer and hope for Raymond is that he will see better days to come.

On a happier note I was delighted to have been invited to a function in Killaloo Orange Hall on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at which the members of Killaloo Accordion Band recognised and celebrated Raymond's involvement with the Band for fifty years. It was a great night filled with music and memories and I was honoured to have been asked to bring my own greetings and those of Saint Columb's Cathedral.

Maintenance of the Cathedral – a building that is 390 years old – is an on-going issue; added to its maintenance is the upkeep of all of our parish properties. We are grateful to **Charlie Ferguson and William Lynn**, who with support from Brian Doherty and Maurice Brown – and with the ever observant eye of Robert McGonigle – ensure that the Cathedral properties are attended to regularly.

The task of maintenance falls on the broad shoulders of our Groundsman **John Hetherington** to whom we say 'Thank You' for all that he does so willingly.

Worship in the Cathedral is our first priority and the re-introduction of the Daily Office has highlighted the fact that this Cathedral Church is a living place of prayer. I am grateful to **David Bell** who assists me in the reading of the Service during the week.

I am also grateful for the ministry of our parish readers, particularly **Jacqui Armstrong and Simon McGonigle**.

I am hopeful that when their personal circumstances change that we will be able to, once again, welcome **Elizabeth Mills and Heather Fielding** back amongst us.

**Aubrey Fielding** has served as a faithful Parish Reader in the past and has been taking it easier in the past years.

The ministry of **Canon John Merrick** is also much appreciated on Sunday and on Tuesday morning and throughout the whole year.

I, personally, value his friendship and support.

**Robert and Linda McGonigle** are also key players in the life of the Cathedral. I, personally, don't know what we would do if they ever decided to retire. Even on the days when they are not 'on duty' they step up to the mark and help out in any emergency.

Our afternoons on Tuesday and Thursday are productive and happy occasions.

In April of last year we re-introduced our Ministry to Visitors and Tourists. Because of the goodwill and co-operation of over thirty members of this parish who act as volunteer tourist guides we have been able to have the Cathedral open each week

10.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m. from Wednesday to Saturday.

Visitors from Londonderry, from other parts of this island, and from many different countries of the world value the welcome that they receive and the information that is shared with them.

From April – September 2022, 8,295 visitors were welcomed to the Cathedral – and as their comments in the Visitors' Book record many of them were delighted with the time that they had spent here.

The work of co-ordinating the volunteer tourist guides was ably undertaken by Robert McGonigle. It was a demanding role but was undertaken with a love for this place.

Robert has, recently, stood down from this role and has been replaced by **Bobby Sloane** who is our new Tourism and Volunteer Co-ordinator.

We thank Bobby for undertaking this work and we hope that he will enjoy the experience of 'meeting and greeting.'

The publication, recently, of '**Treasures of Saint Columb's Cathedral**' – so ably written and presented by **Richard Doherty and Tim Webster**, assisted and encouraged by our own Ian Bartlett – is proving to be a timely and valuable asset to the Cathedral's archives. It is a 'god-send' for our team of volunteer tourist guides who sometimes are asked the awkward question.

This new booklet will provide an accurate and authoritative answer to the amateur and professional historian and to the casual visitor.

The ministry exercised in the Sunday School, under the careful guidance of **Irene Hewitt**, has been much talked about in the past year. The initiative '**Adopt a Grandparent**' caught the attention of many people – including as we know the producers of 'Songs of Praise'.

Our young people continue to visit and interact with our older parishioners and on the 'Songs of Praise' programme they were excellent ambassadors for the Cathedral and we are justly proud of every one of them.

Last year four members of the Parish were confirmed:

**Elliot McClintock, Sam Reilly, Emily Fielding and Kali Dalzell.**

This year, on the evening of Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June, six teenagers will be presented to Bishop Andrew Forster to be confirmed.

Please pray for them and their families.

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

The Templemore Branch of The Mothers' Union, although small in number, is ably led by **Irene Hewitt** – with Diocesan President Jacqui Armstrong an active member – and even after 110 years it is still an active and important organisation within this parish.

We offer our congratulations to the officers and members of today while at the same time remembering all those who played a part in the years that have passed.

The Mothers' Union, in conjunction with Bishops' Appeal and Tearfund Ireland, have developed a Domestic Abuse programme entitled '**Equipping The Church To Take Action And End Domestic Abuse.**'

In February and March of this year I was invited, along with **Irene Hewitt, Valerie Long and Erica Dougherty**, to take part in a five part programme.

The sessions were held on Zoom and involved parishioners from many parishes throughout Ireland.

It was interesting – and humbling – to learn that Gender Based Violence is an issue in almost every country of the world.

It is estimated that 1:3 people – women and men – are subjected to domestic abuse, physical and emotional, every day.

This initiative seeks to educate men and women, boys and girls and to instil in them a greater sense of respect for themselves and for each other.

Respect for oneself will lead in turn to respect for other people

and, hopefully, in time Gender Based Violence will become less of an issue for discussion and action.

I applaud Jacqui Armstrong, who is the Mothers' Union Lead on Domestic Abuse in Ireland, and her colleagues from Bishops' Appeal and Tearfund Ireland, for all that they do.

Respect for other people, especially for children, young people and vulnerable adults, lies at the heart of **Safeguarding Trust.**

I am so grateful, and the Parish is very fortunate, to have the expertise and support of **Elizabeth Fielding and Malcolm Hewitt** who, along with me, are the members of the Parish Safeguarding Trust Panel.

I find that their advice is invaluable as I and the Select Vestry negotiate the many Statements, Protocols and issues that have to be attended to month by month.

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

Caring for young people, providing for their needs, and the needs of older people as well, is one of the things that Cathedral Youth Club does so well. **Jeanette Warke** and her staff provide a full and varied programme of classes and events for the people of the Fountain and for many others throughout the City.

Last year the Youth Club celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation by The Very Reverend George Good and David and Jeanette Warke. To mark the occasion and to honour Jeanette (who just happened to be his mother), Alderman Graham Warke – then the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council – hosted a Dinner in The Guildhall on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

We congratulate Jeanette and The Cathedral Youth Club on this record of service and wish them well for many years to come in their beautiful building in the Fountain.

A good news story that has been reported in the past 12 months has been the situation regarding the Cathedral Schools. This has been an issue that has dragged on and on for many years and has caused some of you, particularly our Parish Administrator Robert McGonigle, many sleepless nights. At one moment it would seem that the issues were being resolved and then those plans would fall flat.

But, at long last, the issues have been resolved – and we await with pleasure the day when our new tenants – In Your Space Circus – will occupy the building.

The signing of an Agreement for Lease has made way for a substantial sum of money being released from Tourism NI.

An Open Day, to allow parishioners and former pupils of the Schools to view the building before the new tenants move in, will be held on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2023.

Fund-raising is an issue that exercises the minds of some of the parishioners. How to raise enough money to keep the Cathedral open and to pay the ever-increasing bills!

One group of parishioners that has encouraged fund-raising initiatives goes under the name EWG – **Events Working Group**.

Along with William Lynn and his wife Elma – and many volunteers – a very successful and enjoyable Open Garden was held at Creevagh House on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2022.

Another fund-raising event planned by the Events Working Group was the Christmas Coffee Morning and Sale that was held in the Cathedral on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2022. This event was in aid of funds to repair the ceiling in the dining room of the Deanery that had collapsed on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

I am happy to report that the ceiling has been renewed, a new chandelier has been donated, and Patricia, Dione and I are so grateful for the support of our parishioners. Music plays a significant part in the life of Saint Columb's Cathedral.

We are grateful to Dr Derek Collins and to Nicky Morton who contribute so much to all of our choirs – The Cathedral Choristers, The Gentlemen of the Cathedral Choir, The Cathedral Chamber Choir and, most recently, The Cathedral Girls' Choir.

The Lunchtime Organ Recitals in the month of July showed the skills of the organists but also the range of music that it is possible to perform on the Organ.

St Columb's School of Music, while being tenants in Cathedral House, also support and contribute to the musical life of the Cathedral.

We were really astounded when Louis Fields and Nicky Morton 'booked' the Cathedral from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022 to showcase their 300+ students and what a privilege it was to share in the success of so many young people.

The Scripture reading (Ephesians 4: 7-16) – The Epistle of the Feast Day of Saint Mark the Evangelist – reminds us that God has given gifts to His Church. He has given gifts to all of us. These gifts are to be recognised and appreciated, but they must also be shared with other people so that together we can build up the Church, the body of Christ. Let us make this a priority in the coming year and go forward with confidence to love and serve the Lord.

