

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, Mrs Shirley Moon, who has served for two years as Rector's Church Warden, and Mrs Finola Young, who has served as People's Church Warden. 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 the first year for some time when the Rectory project has not dominated our business and we have been free to begin reflecting on wider issues such as Parish development and our ministry to 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 much has fallen on him as he has sought to guide the Vestry through these difficult financial times.

In September 2005 the then Select Vestry asked Mr Denis Henderson to coordinate the Rectory Project. As I have already said this project has now come to a conclusion. I would want again to take this opportunity to thank Denis for the huge commitment of time and energy he has brought to this project. At some stage in the not too distant future we are going to have to turn our attention to the condition of the Church building itself. Some remedial work has been carried out (I would want to thank Ian Malcolm for overseeing this) but there is no point spending large sums until the root cause of the problems is tackled.

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 want to pay a particular tribute to the Sunday School Team. This year we have been blessed by the presence of Shaz Basdeo, our Youth Worker among us. She not only brought her own skills and energy but has that particular gift of being able to energise others and we have seen the fruits of that in the Family Services and of course the Nativity. Unfortunately Shaz is having to leave us to resume her studies in Trinity but in the short time she was with us she has made a huge contribution to the life of this Parish. It is for us to build on what she has started among us. The Select Vestry made the decision that this post will continue and the position of part time Youth Worker has been advertised and candidates have already been interviewed. This year, following representation from parents, we took the step of preparing youngsters for Confirmation during their final year in the Burrow School and this groups is now continuing to meet as a Youth Club on Tuesday evenings. We would anticipate a similar size group being presented for Confirmation next year which gives us a good size core group for future youth work in the Parish. In this regard the continuation of the post of youth worker is crucial and I would want to thank the Select Vestry for continuing to see this as a priority. 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. Another lovely development this year has been the establishment of a Mother & Toddler Group within the Parish. This meets every Thursday between 10 and 12. Depending on the level of support we would hop that this would continue next year. 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 must however realise that the presence of a Youth Worker does not mean that we do not need volunteers to continue to work with our children.

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.

I would like to thank Cathy Fennell has now taken up this position and I would like to thank Cathy the work she has already put into 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 two 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. Derek Fennell is working alongside her this year but we will need a new organiser for next year.

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.

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.

I would like also to thank Mr Alistair Macmillan for his stewardship of the records of the Garden of Remembrance. Thanks also to my Stanley McMullen for coordinating the

distribution of the Diocesan Review and also to Mr Eddie Kerr for looking after the Church of Ireland Gazette.

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. Derek Fennell has now taken over from Troy the job of coordinating the cutting of the grass from Troy Hopkins. Our thanks are due to Troy for the work he has put into this in the past. We have recently obtained a container which has been placed in Church grounds. The purpose of this is to store the mowers and other equipment for maintaining the grounds. This will make the whole job of maintaining the grounds easier and hopefully encourage more people to volunteer their time. 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.

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.

Earlier in these comments I mentioned that among the issues being addressed by the Select Vestry has been the issue of parish Development. This arose out of our participation in a Church of Ireland Parish development Conference last September. You may recall a series of meetings that were held around Lent and Easter last year in which groups were invited to look at different areas of Parish life and reflect on our strengths and areas of need. We recognised as one of our strengths that this is a warm and welcoming community. In the context of that we recognised a number of areas that would need attention. We recognised that we did have a problem engaging with the younger generation and this is reflected in our worshipping congregation. We also recognised that while we are a welcoming community we provide few opportunities for people to meet and socialise on an informal basis. We have the facilities here – we need to think how we can use them. People also expressed a desire for opportunities for to their faith in the context of groups. There was

also a desire to provide ways in which people could offer service both within and outside the Parish community.

We have made a good start on our work with young people. The year Shaz has spent with us has energised our whole approach in this area. We now need to apply our minds and energies to those other needs we have identified. Over the last number of years a number of meeting points within the Parish have gone. We used to have a Mothers' Union. The Burrow Players have ceased to operate. The monthly Whist Drive is currently in abeyance. These in the past have helped provide the glue that keeps a community together, providing opportunities of fellowship – in an increasingly disjointed society fellowship, community is one of the gifts we can offer. A number of people are currently looking at ways in which we re-develop this glue I was talking about. A number of suggestions have already been made, regular social dances, walking group – other people will have their own suggestions.

Another area currently under exploration in the area of service. The Burrow School has a computer suite – possibility of computer classes.

In the area of spirituality. We are considering running a Network Course in the autumn – an avenue within which people can explore their own particular gifting within the life of the Church.

Place within the life of the Church for a variety of groups to explore ideas.

Troy and a group of others are keen to explore the whole area of prayer support.

One other issue I want to address before I finish concerns the recent economic downturn that has impacted on every aspect of Irish society. All of us know families that have been affected in terms of salary cuts, unemployment, negative equity, reduced income from investments.

Archbishops will shortly be announcing a major appeal being organised through Protestant Aid to provide funds for the increased calls that have been made and are likely to be made. Details will be distributed through the next issue of the Newsletter.

In the past twelve months I have conducted 17 Baptisms but no marriages. I also conducted 5 funerals, This year we mourn the passing of Pamela Blandford, Rosemary Walton, Jenny Newell, Peter Holmes and Jack Maguinness. We also mourn the recent passing of Derek McCullough, formally very active in the life of this Parish.

I am pleased to announce that Mrs Irene Collier has kindly agreed to act as my Church Warden for the coming year. Mr Ian Malcolm has indicated that he would like to stand down as Rector's Glebe Warden – I have not as yet managed to secure a replacement.