

The Newsletter

September 2015

Rector:

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Davie Wharton of Seir Kieran Parish with his winning entry in the FBD Crossbred Belgian Blue Championship at the Ossory Show on 26th July

Clonenagh Group of Parishes

Annatrim, Borris-in-Ossory, Lacca, Mountrath, Roskelton, Seir Kieran.

Rector's Letter

Back in the spring, our select vestries were required to complete a census form from the diocese giving the total numbers of EVERY member of the Church of Ireland who belonged to our parish. The numbers were being sought because the parish assessment is based on our church population, we pay for every person we have on our lists, whether or not they ever attend, whether or not they ever give anything.

Our immediate response is likely to be to say that everyone who does not pay what the diocese calls "sustentation", a word I had never met until I came here, should be taken off of our lists. But perhaps thinking about "sustentation" is our problem, we should not give in order to pay an assessment, we should give because we believe we are only giving back to God what he has given us.

When we give, we should think about the example of John Wesley, the Methodist leader. In 1731, his income was £30 and his expenses were £28, so he had £2 to give away. In 1732, his income was £60 and his expenses were £28, so he had £32 to give away. In 1733, his income was £90 and his expenses were £28, so he had £62 to give to away. By 1734, his income had risen to £120 and his expenses to £30, leaving him £90 to give away. There was one year when his income was over £1,400, but

keeping his expenses at around £30, he was able to give away almost £1,400.

Saint Paul says we should be regular givers and that what we give should reflect what we have. Saint Paul would never have agreed with the notion of "sustentation", give willingly and generously, he would have said, or don't give at all. In the First Letter to the Corinthians Chapter 16, Saint Paul writes, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income". In the Second Letter to the Corinthians Chapter 9, he offers us guidance about how we should approach church finances, "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

The measure of whether our parishes are the sort of churches Saint Paul would recognize, or whether they are more like organizations where people just pay their subscriptions, is how readily and generously we give to God's work. Saint Paul would say that if we are going to give begrudgingly, then perhaps we shouldn't give at all. If we recognize what God has done for us in sending his Son, then we will be cheerful givers.



Church of Ireland News

More Action Needed to Tackle Homelessness

The Church and Society Commission of the Church of Ireland issued a statement on 18th August calling on the Government to address the issue of homelessness:

The news that a family of five, including three young children, had to sleep rough in Dublin on Monday night last highlighted, once again, the scandal of homelessness in Ireland, one of the richest countries in the world. There were more than 1,100 children in over 500 families living in emergency accommodation, bed and breakfasts and hotel rooms in the past six months and the numbers continue to rise.

This has a serious negative effect on children and their futures because they cannot stay in one school when they are moved from place to place as charities and local authorities try to find accommodation for them and their families, often on a day-to-day basis. The Church and Society Commission of the Church of Ireland is very concerned at the plight of people living in these conditions and calls on the Government to prioritise spending of available resources and focus its efforts on resolving the crisis – so that those in need of shelter will be adequately housed and children will not be disadvantaged because of their family circumstances.

New Archdeacon of Ferns

Canon Bob Gray has been appointed as Archdeacon of Cashel, Ferns, Waterford and Lismore in succession to the Venerable Chris Long who retired at the end of July. Canon Gray is currently rector of the Ardamine, Kilnamanagh and Monamolín Group of parishes. His installation as Archdeacon of Ferns is scheduled for Sunday 6th September in St Edan's Cathedral at 4.00 pm.

Ploughing Championships

The Church of Ireland will have its usual tent at the National Ploughing Championships at Ratheniska on 22nd -24th September. If you are going to the Ploughing, do call along to the tent and say "hello".

Environmental Charter

The Church and Society Commission has commended to parishes the environmental charter for the Church, which was adopted by the General Synod in May 2015. It calls for:

- Reduction in waste;
- Increasing environmental awareness across parishes;
- Exercising leadership through environmental responsibility;
- Identifying spiritually and practically with the developing world; and
- Influencing policy in the Church and State.

Parish Notes

Married and engaged: Wedding congratulations and prayers for God's blessing go to Yvonne Richardson and Jason Pagura who were married in Queensland in July and whose marriage was blessed in Mountrath church on 2nd August, and to Pamela Kavanagh and Paul Sydes who were married in Roskelton church on 7th August.

Engagement congratulations and prayers for their preparations go to Linda McKay and William Carter whose wedding takes place on Saint John the Baptist's day next year.

Sympathy: The summer saw the passing of two former parishioners. Dinah Shirley, formerly of Keelough Glebe, and a familiar face in Borris-in-Ossory and Mountrath, died on Friday, 17th July and was buried at Aghaboe on Sunday, 19th July and George Thompson formerly of Derrylusk, a son and a great friend of our parish, died on Saturday, 25th July and was buried on Monday, 27th July.

We extend our condolences to the Thompson and Shirley family circles of both and to the family of Kathleen Whitten at Seir Kieran who bade farewell to Kathleen, who had died in Canada on 29th June and whose burial took place at Aghancon Church on Sunday, 26th July.

The Blessing of the Schoolbags: On Sunday, 30th August there will be a group service in Mountrath at 10.30 am to mark the beginning of the new school year. Young people are asked to bring their school bags for a blessing prayer and they will receive a tag to tie to their bag on which there will be a

prayer to say every day. All young people from every school will be welcome.

Rector away: The Rector is away for nineteen days from Monday, 31st August until Saturday, 19th September. In his absence, calls will be taken by Canon Patrick Harvey and the Revd Brian O'Rourke.

Harvest services: Our harvest thanksgiving season has come around again and our services take place over a four week period. We begin in Borris-in-Ossory on Sunday, 20th September at 7 pm when Brian Donohue, a pastor from Virginia in the United States will be our speaker.

The harvest service for Clonenagh National School will be on the evening of Friday, 25th September and will be followed by the harvest services in Mountrath church on Sunday, 27th September at 4 pm and at Seir Kieran church at 7 pm when the preacher will be Mr Richard Codd, a farmer and teacher from Tullow.

On Sunday, 4th October, the harvest at Lacca will be at 4 pm with Phyllis Grothier, All Ireland President of the Mothers' Union as preacher.

Our harvest festival services draw to a close on Sunday, 11th October, when Mabel Peavoy will be our preacher at Annatrim at 11 am and the bishop will be preaching at Roskelton at 7 pm.

Michaelmas: There will be Holy Communion for the feast day of Saint Michael and All Angels in Mountrath at 8 pm on Tuesday, 29th September.

Foundations for the future? One clear lesson in recent months has been that the more churches there are open, and the more services there are available, the larger will be the total attendance. Attendances at individual churches may have seemed erratic at times, up one Sunday and down the next, but, when added up, the total number in church on the first, third and fourth Sundays of each month over the summer has typically been 100-130, (on the August bank holiday Sunday, there were 32 people in Roskelton, 11 in Seir Kieran, 34 in Lacca, 29 in Borris-in-Ossory, and 27 in Mountrath, a total of 133), or between a quarter and a third of our church population.

On the second Sunday of the month, when there are only three churches open, the aggregate attendance falls to a number of around 60-70.

Being Church of Ireland: In the history of the Church of Ireland, and in the life of our parishes, continuity and change and unity and diversity have been important.

Continuity means recognizing that God has been our help in ages past, change means recognizing that he is our hope for years to come.

Unity and diversity means learning from reading the story of the early Church in the Acts of the Apostles about how different people could approach being Christians in different ways, but share in the one faith.

In our own parishes, we are going to follow those themes in some small ways in the coming months. Recognizing our continuity and unity with the ancient church, recognizing the great heritage we have received and how we walk in the steps of the saints before us, there will be saint's or holy day communion service in Mountrath each month.

Despite being a bit hit and miss in the past, there have usually been ten or a dozen people at these services and it is hoped to build on this foundation. We must also acknowledge that the Holy Spirit also calls us to change and diversity and for more than a year, there have been wishes expressed that there might be a fellowship group in Lacca.

Beginning in October, it is planned to have a meeting on the second Thursday of each month, for Bible study, prayer and praise.

To reassure anyone who might feel uncomfortable (and to reassure the bishop who might be worried at what might be happening out at the edge of the diocese), we will use the late evening office on pages 162-164 of the Prayer Book as the structure for each meeting – it allows for singing, for sharing thoughts on Scripture, and for open prayer.

Some of us would attend a saints' day communion, but would not attend a fellowship group, and some of us would attend a fellowship group, but would not attend a saints' day communion, what matters is that we accept that unity and diversity are part of God's way of doing things.

Mountrath church windows: Progress toward the replacement of the windows in Mountrath church continues, slowly but surely. The process has been slow because of the need to reassure the planning authorities that every step of the process complies with the conservation requirements (they even wanted to know as to what use the present window frames would be put, frames that were installed in the 1960s and which are disintegrating).

At the time of writing these notes, Laois County Council still had not approved the submission made by our architect.

Confirmation: Our prayers and good wishes for the future go to those who were confirmed at Annatrim on Sunday, 28th June, Neville Bennett, James Cooper, Ricky Saint Leger and Philip Stanley from Clonenagh National School, and Cathy Galbraith who joined us from Rathdowney Parish.

Holiday Bible Club: We had twenty children registered for our holiday Bible Club and a daily attendance of 17-18. We are very grateful to Mervyn Tomb and his team for the enthusiasm and energy of the week and in their work to challenge young people to the faith.

Thursday Bible Club: Our Thursday Bible Club begins again on Thursday, 10th September. All young people of national school age are welcome. We have no Sunday School in our parishes which makes the club, where there are games and crafts as well as songs and Bible teaching, especially important.

Parish numbers: At each select vestry meeting that took place following our Easter vestry meetings in the spring, we went carefully through our parish lists so as to provide the diocesan council with precise figures. Our overall number had grown from 353 to 394, (Clonenagh 168, Offerlane 165 and Borris-in-Ossory/Seir Kieran 61) and our numbers reflected the sort of figure we might have expected from the civil census of 2011. The civil census figure are those that should apply to every parish, as the requirement from the diocesan council was that the lists should include everyone we might expect to bury, not just those who come to church or subscribe. It is hoped that other parishes will have submitted fig-

ures that correspond with what the civil census would indicate, otherwise our diocesan book of reports will undermine arguments we should retain our diocese.

At the general synod, defence of our diocese was based on the civil census that showed the diocese having a population of 19,300 – if parish returns show a number less than half of that figure, the arguments that the diocese should not be merged with another will be undermined.

Historical Society: The local history society continues to meet on the second Thursday of each month at 6.15 pm in Mountrath library. Members of our own community are very welcome – and would assist with many of the discussions.

Flower Festival: Tullamore Parish are holding a flower festival at Saint Catherine's Church on 4th-6th September. The Festival runs from 11 am to 8 pm on the Friday and Saturday and from 11 am to 6 pm on the Sunday, it is followed by Songs of Hope and Inspiration at 7 pm. Admission is €10 and the festival is supporting Living Links and Supporting Suicide Awareness.

Phone 086 165 5799 for details, or email flowerfestival15@gmail.com

Girls' Friendly Society: Our GFS branch begins a new year on Friday, 18th September. All girls of school age are welcome to join us for evenings of games and activities.

Fundraising Committee Meeting on Wednesday September 2nd at 8:30pm in the Parochial Hall.

Smiles

The Vicar at Harvest Festival had arranged all the vegetables in front of the Altar. He asked the children if they could name them. The replies were potatoes, cabbage, carrots, broccoli, and swede. So he asked if they could use one word to cover them all. A little boy held his hand up and replied "Gravy"

* * *

A beautiful princess is going out for a walk when she meets a talking frog. "I'm not really a frog", says the frog. "I've been turned into a frog by the wicked witch. Really I'm the incredibly handsome son of the local farmer. All I need is a kiss from a beautiful young woman like you and I'll turn back into the handsome farmer and we'll get married and live happily ever after."

"Really", says the young woman, picking

up the frog and putting it in her pocket, "The way things are with farming, I'll settle for a talking frog."

* * *

A farmer turns up to the evening service and discovers that he and the vicar are the only people there.

"What shall we do?" asks the vicar. "Well", replies the farmer, "If I goes to feed my sheep and only one turns up, I feeds her."

So after four hymns, two sung canticles, one sung psalm, two lessons, prayers for everything under the sun and a twenty minute sermon the service ends.

"If I goes to feed my sheep and only one turns up, I feeds her", says the farmer on the way out, "but I don't give her the whole bag full!"



Members of Mountrath Mothers' Union branch enjoyed a tour of Gee's Jams in Abbeyleix on Tuesday 28/07/15 followed by a lovely tea hosted by Helen. We are truly grateful to Helen and her Family for a most enjoyable afternoon.

Services & Readings

September 2015						
First Sunday 6th	<i>Proverbs 22: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23 Psalm 125 James 2: 1-10, 11-13, 14-17 Mark 7: 24-37</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Morning Prayer	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Lacca 10.30am Holy Communion	Borris-in-Ossory 11.00am Morning Prayer	Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion
Second Sunday 13th	<i>Proverbs 1: 20-33 Psalm 19 or Psalm 116:1-9 James 3: 1-12 Mark 8: 27-38</i>	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer		Annatrim 11.00am Holy Communion		Mountrath 11.30am Morning Prayer
Third Sunday 20th	<i>Proverbs 31: 10-31 Psalm 1 James 3: 13 - 4: 3,7-8a Mark 9: 30-37</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Holy Communion	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Lacca 10.30am Service of the Word	Mountrath 11.30am Morning Prayer	Borris-in-Ossory 7.00pm Harvest Communion
Fourth Sunday 27th	<i>Esther 7: 1-6, 9-10, 9:20-22 Psalm 124 James 5: 13-20 Mark 9: 38-50</i>	Lacca 10.30am Family Service	Annatrim 11.00am Morning Prayer	Mountrath 4.00pm Harvest Communion		Seir Kieran 7.00pm Harvest Communion

Parish Diary

September

- 2nd Wednesday.....Fundraising Committee Meeting (*page 6*)
 4th-6th Fri-Sun.....Tullamore Parish Flower Festival (*page 6*)
16th Wednesday.....Closing date for October Newsletter
 18th Friday.....G.F.S. (*page 6*)

PLEASE NOTE NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE CHANGE

Items for the October 2015 Newsletter need to be with the editor by **WEDNESDAY September 16th AT THE LATEST**, so that the Newsletter can be assembled in time for the **3rd Sunday, September 20th** .

PLEASE make your item as ready for publication as possible, and most importantly, please ensure that you spell names correctly.

Ideally, items should be submitted by e-mail to-

newsletter@clonenagh.com

Otherwise to- Ivor Clegg, Cloncourse, Mountrath, Co. Laois.

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