

The Newsletter

January 2016

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Advent hope at Mbayaya:

Lent and harvest collections from our parishes have supported the purchase of livestock for poor families in Shyogwe diocese in Rwanda. The heifer pictured is one that was given to a family at Mbayaya. People have no pasture land so the children of the family go out to gather fodder along the roadside to bring back to the animals. The season of Advent brought new hope for the family, who will now have milk for themselves and milk to sell to earn money to pay for school books and uniforms and for medical care.

Clonenagh Group of Parishes

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

Rector's Letter

Thank you to all who prayed for my safe journeying during my week in Shyogwe diocese in Rwanda. Apart from leaving behind my Yellow Fever certificate, causing Katharine to have to drive from Kilkenny to Dublin Airport, and then losing my boarding card for the second leg of the homeward journey, from Ethiopia to Ireland, it was an uneventful trip. The greatest hardships were travelling on mud roads and washing in cold water in the mornings, neither of which were hardships at all when compared with the extreme poverty suffered by most of the people.

It was encouraging to see progress with agriculture and education and medical care and to see how far small amounts of money could go, it was encouraging also to try to learn about the strengths of the churches there and what lessons might be brought home. Three brief words seemed to capture those things at which the Africans were so strong: community, worship and service.

A gathering of an African church is like a gathering of Christians in New Testament times, it is the gathering of a community, there is a genuine warmth and affection among the members. How far is that true of churches in Ireland? Is there a genuine sense of community, or do we go to church, sit with the people we know and talk with those who are our friends, and sometimes ignore, or even avoid, others? (I have to confess to having too often done this myself!) We need to ask ourselves what we can do to make our churches stronger communities.

Worship in Rwanda is a great event. People take God very seriously, they prepare all week for the Sunday worship, there may be as many as five choirs in a congregation, and the service is something into which people will put their heart and soul. During the visit I attended two services, one lasted four hours and one lasted three hours; these were typical of the churches. How does our worship compare? What resources do we put into our services? Why do we spend so much money on our buildings and then only use them for forty-five minutes a couple of times a month? Is our worship something that would attract people to join us? What can we, as individuals, do to develop worship? How can we have a greater sense of God?

And what about service? The motto of the Diocese of Shyogwe is "a holy soul in a healthy body" and the diocese devotes much of its time and resources to fulfilling that motto, it tries to serve the communities in which it ministers; people see that the church is prepared to practice what it preaches. We might ask to what extent our churches serve our communities? If the Church of Ireland disappeared tomorrow, would we be missed? Do we give to our communities as generously as God gives to us? How can we be better servants to those around us?

May we be people of community, worship and service in 2016.

Happy new year.



Church of Ireland News

Christmas Message from the Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory

The recent international conference in Paris sought to address the urgent challenge and threat caused to humanity by climate change, for much of which we are responsible ourselves. Our planet is warming up, and it needs to be allowed to cool down before irreversible damage is done. Finding ways to achieve that cooling would be good news, Gospel indeed, particularly for the poor of the world who suffer most from the effects of global warming.

Christmas especially as portrayed since Victorian times is all about warming up a cold world, of big fires burning on snowy nights, of frost encrusted landscapes, of people of goodwill trudging like King Wenceslas across the snow to address poverty by providing heat. Now, although we must never neglect those still literally cold in our very midst, the wider picture is becoming the opposite to that of the Christmas cards, and in truth we have to recognise that global poverty will often be fought by combating global warmth.

Christ came into this world to show us how to live better, to act more responsibly in our relationships with one another as well as with creation, to understand our delicate human interdependence as equals who share the image of God. The plea from the manger of Bethlehem is that we should be generous to each other, and stop robbing the poor of their future and the vulnerable of their dignity.

All this demands, for God's sake, a willingness to 'cool it', to realise that we are condemning the world Christ came to save by our apparent addiction to warming it up. People in the global south grasp the message of Christmas perfectly

well (and perhaps better) without the distractions of longing for a White Christmas with blazing fires. Perhaps the way they experience and illustrate Christmas, in an atmosphere already witnessing the destructive effects of too much warmth, may provide the clue to a more excellent way forward for us.

Let's all give our descendants a proper present by reducing the warmth. Have truly a cool Christmas and therefore a happy one.

Internet safety

Among the Christmas gifts will no doubt be internet-ready devices: conventional computers and laptops, tablets, smartphones, MP3 players, smart watches, smart TVs and games systems. All of these open the door to endless hours of entertainment, education and communication. Indeed, these devices will help many families and friends to keep in touch over the Christmas period. With such devices, which have undeniable value, also comes a challenge for parents and carers. There are factors relating to internet use among young people which can present particular risks. Cyber-bullying, easy access to inappropriate content, identity theft and so-called 'grooming' are all matters which naturally worry parents. To avoid them completely might seem like trying to hold back an unassailable tide. That being the case, what options do parents have? Here are a few ideas:

1. Talk to your children about internet safety
2. Educate yourself about the dangers
3. Make use of resources from child protection agencies
4. Talk to other parents

Parish Notes

Holy Baptism: On Sunday, 22nd November 2015 at Saint Peter's Church, Mountrath, Thomas Miller, son of John and Avril Hargroves of Ard Edmond, Castletown.

Congratulations to Roy and Avril on the birth of their baby daughter Rachel Jean Treacy.

The Sunday after Christmas: God is as much present with us on the Sunday after Christmas as on Christmas Day. Our services for the fourth Sunday of the month take place as usual, with a couple of slight changes to the times. In order to allow the Rector to take Seir Kieran, Annatrim and Mountrath. The service at Seir Kieran will be at 9.15 and the service in Annatrim will be at 10.30 with the service in Mountrath being at the usual time of 11.30. The family service in Lacca will be at the usual time of 10.30.

Tractor Run: The sixth annual Clonenagh National School Vintage Tractor and Car Run will be on Monday, 28th December, starting in Coolrain at 1 pm.

Covenant Service: There will be covenant services, committing the coming year into God's hands in each church of the five churches in which there is worship on the first Sunday of the New Year, Sunday, 3rd January 2015. We hope people will start the year as they mean to continue and will be present to make New Year spiritual resolutions.

Epiphany: We remember the coming of the wise men with Holy Communion for the Epiphany in Mountrath Church on Wednesday, 6th January at 8 pm.

Farmers' Service: Our sixth annual service of prayers for the farming year and the blessing of the plough takes place on Plough Sunday, 10th January 2015, at Mountrath Church at 7 pm. All farmers, from whatever tradition they might come, are welcome at the service.

Fellowship: After three gatherings of our monthly fellowship group, where we sing hymns, read the Late Evening Office from the Book of Common Prayer, and discuss a passage of Scripture, the aggregate attendance is thirty-six, so an average of twelve. The evenings have hopefully been helpful to those who have gathered and are complete by 9.30 pm. The next fellowship meeting is in Lacca on Thursday, 14th January at 8 pm.

Third Sunday: Our monthly evening service is in Lacca church on Sunday, 17th January at 4 pm. It will be followed, as usual, by an opportunity for tea, buns and conversation.

Rector away: The Rector will be away from Monday, 18th January until Wednesday, 27th January, visiting his family in England from 18th-24th January and attending the Centre for Studies in Rural Ministry in Gladstone's Library at Hawarden in North Wales from 25th-27th January.

Family Service: The monthly family service in Lacca takes place on Sunday, 24th January at 10.30 am.

Mothers' Union: The Mothers' Union branch meets at the home of Jean Treacy on Monday, 25th January at 8 pm when Silé Peavoy will talk on coping with stress.

Hospital calls: Please let the Rector know if people are in hospital. There have been occasions when he has been visiting parishioners in hospital only to discover, days later, that he has been passing the doorway to the ward where there was someone who "didn't want to bother the Rector," and he was unaware that they were there.

Shyogwe livestock and crops: Thank you to everyone whose contributions during Lent and harvest allowed us to give a draft for 2,928 United States dollars to the farm project in Shyogwe diocese. There will be some forty goat kids available for distribution to poor families in February and there is a continuing programme of heifer distribution from the ten cows at Mbayaya farm. The heifers are a cross between the traditional African Ankolle cattle and European Friesians. There is a desire not to allow the Akolle genes in the cattle to become too limited as the Ankolle have a hereditary capacity to cope in Africa, while pure bred Friesians would fall prey to various diseases and insects. One of the plans is that Mbayaya farm would also be used to produce suckers and saplings that would be distributed to poorer families to allow them to grow fruit on

their own small pieces of land. In a country where the average farmer's land holding is half an acre, every animal and every plant is important.

Sunday sermons: The Rector's sermon for each Sunday can be found by checking his website, www.forthefainthearted.com which also has lots of other stuff (most of it less spiritual!).

Thanks to everybody who contributed to the **Leprosy Mission boxes**, the total collected to date is €129.50.

The **Laois Federation I.C.A. Choir** Advent/Christmas Concert in St Peter's Church Mountrath on Sunday December 6th has raised €1050 to date, in aid of the Windows Restoration Fund.

Many thanks to everyone who attended and made it a great success, and thanks too to everyone who contributed to and helped with the refreshments afterwards.

Camross Active Retirement News: Church gate collection Lacca: €51.40; Annatrim: €107.44.

Sincere thanks to all the collectors, Gladys Danne & Geraldine Tynan at Lacca and Hannah Dooley at Annatrim.

The Retirees Committee wish to thank most sincerely everyone who supported these collections, thank you all.

Also, sincere thanks to Canon Ian Poulton for allowing us to collect at Lacca & Annatrim, and to Michael Elliot and Valerie Handcock for their help.

Smiles

An Irishman man walking along a beach one New Year's Day was deep in prayer. All of a sudden he said out loud, "Lord, please grant me one wish." Suddenly the sky clouded above his head and in a booming voice the Lord said, "Because you have tried to be faithful to me in all ways, I will grant you one wish." The man said, "Please, Lord, build a bridge to America, so I can drive over anytime I want this year to see all my family who have emigrated." The Lord said, "Your request is very materialistic. Think of the logistics of that kind of undertaking. The supports required to reach the bottom of the Atlantic! The concrete and steel it would take! I can do it, but it is hard for me to justify such an intervention just to satisfy your desire for worldly things. Take a little more time and think of another wish, a wish you think would truly evoke my almighty power of blessing." The man thought about it for a long time. Finally he said, "Lord, I wish that I could understand women. I want to know how they really feel, what they are thinking when they give me the silent treatment, why they cry, what they mean when they say 'oh, it's nothing,' and, most important, how I can make a woman truly happy." After a few moments, God said: "You want two lanes or four on that bridge?"

A minister dies and is waiting in line at the Pearly Gates. Ahead of him is a guy who's dressed in sunglasses, a loud shirt, leather jacket, and jeans Saint Peter addresses this guy, "Who are you, so that I may know whether or not to admit you to the Kingdom of Heaven?" The guy replies, "I'm Joe Cohen, taxi-driver, of New York City."

Saint Peter consults his list. He smiles and says to the taxi-driver, "Take this silken robe and golden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The taxi-driver goes into Heaven with his robe and staff, and it's the minister's turn. He stands erect and booms out, "I am Joseph Snow, pastor of Saint Mary's for the last forty-three years." Saint Peter consults his list. He says to the minister, "Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and enter the Kingdom of Heaven." "Just a minute," says the minister. "That man was a taxi-driver and he gets a silken robe and golden staff. How can this be?" "Up here, we work by results," says Saint Peter. "While you preached, people slept; while he drove, people prayed!"

"Thanks very much for the beautiful jumper," said Charles, kissing his grandmother dutifully on the cheek.

"Oh, there's nothing to thank me for," she murmured.

"That's what I thought, but Mum said I had to."

The grandson had just taken a photograph of his ancient grandmother who'd come to stay for Christmas and was celebrating her 99th birthday the same day. "Grannie, I sure hope I'm around next year to photograph you on your 100th birthday," he said.

"Why not?" his grandmother shrugged. "You look healthy."

Parish Diary

December 2015

28th Monday.....Tractor Run (*page 4*)

January 2016

6th Wednesday.....Epiphany Service (*page 4*)

10th Sunday.....Farmer's Service (*page 4*)

25th Monday.....Mothers' Union meeting (*page 5*)



Items for the February 2016 Newsletter need to be with the editor by **WEDNESDAY January 20th AT THE LATEST**, so that the Newsletter can be assembled in time for the fourth Sunday, January 24th.

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.

057-8621277/087-2522162

This Newsletter and many older editions can be downloaded directly from

www.clonenagh.com

Services & Readings

December 2015					
Christmas Eve 24th	<i>Isaiah 9: 2-7 Psalm 96 Titus 2: 11-14 Luke 2: 1-14, 15-20</i>	Seir Kieran 7.00pm Holy Communion	Borris-in-Ossory 8.15pm Holy Communion		Lacca 9.30pm Holy Communion
Christmas Day 25th	<i>Isaiah 62: 6-12 Psalm 97 Titus 3: 4-7 Luke 2:1-7, 8-20</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Holy Communion		Annatrim 10.30am Holy Communion	Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion
Fourth Sunday 27th	<i>1 Samuel 2: 18-20, 26 Psalm 148 Colossians 3: 12-17 Luke 2: 41-52</i>	Seir Kieran 9.15am Morning Prayer	Annatrim 10.30am Holy Communion	Lacca 10.30am Family Service	Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion

January 2016						
First Sunday 3rd	<i>Jeremiah 31: 7-14 Psalm 147: 12-20 Ephesians 1: 3-14 John 1:10-18</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Covenant Service	Seir Kieran 9.30am Covenant Service	Lacca 10.30am Covenant Service & Holy Communion	Borris-in-Ossory 11.00am Covenant Service	Mountrath 11.30am Covenant Service & Holy Communion
Second Sunday 10th	<i>Isaiah 43: 1-7 Psalm 29 Acts 8: 14-17 Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22</i>	Seir Kieran 9.30am Holy Communion	Annatrim 11.00am Holy Communion	Mountrath 11.30am Morning Prayer	Mountrath 7.00pm Plough Sunday Farmers Service	
Third Sunday 17th	<i>Isaiah 62:1-5 Psalm 36: 5-10 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11 John 2: 1-11</i>	Roskelton 9.30am Holy Communion	Seir Kieran 9.30am Morning Prayer	Borris-in-Ossory 11.00am Holy Communion	Mountrath 11.30am Morning Prayer	Lacca 4.00pm Evening Prayer
Fourth Sunday 24th	<i>Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 Psalm 19 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31a Luke 4: 14-21</i>	Seir Kieran 9.15am Morning Prayer	Lacca 10.30am Family Service	Annatrim 11.00am Morning Prayer		Mountrath 11.30am Holy Communion
Fifth Sunday 31st	<i>Ezekiel 43: 27 - 44: 4 Psalm 48 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 Luke 2: 22-40</i>	Mountrath 9.00am Holy Communion		Lacca 10.30am Group Service		