

Carrickfergus Parish Newsletter

Incorporating the Churches of:
ST NICHOLAS
OUR LADY OF LOURDES

carrickparish.org

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Produced by
Carrickfergus Parish Pastoral Council

Into 2005 with hope and anticipation

From the Pen of the Parish Priest

With another year over, and a new one just begun, we find ourselves reflecting on what has past and looking forward to what is to come in this New Year 2005.

For me, 2004 will be remembered as the year of Mission. On the inter-Church front, great strides were made in reaching out the hand of friendship to our brothers and sisters from other denominations in Carrickfergus and Whitehead. The inter-Church Ministry culminated in the visits of the Unity-Pilgrims from Clonard, along with members of our own Parish, to various denominations for Sunday worship. The welcome they received in each Church

was amazing, but not surprising, and a sign of real friendships and relationships being built up in our community.

In October our Holy father Pope John Paul announced a special 'Year of the Eucharist', dedicated to a renewal of our faith and devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. For me this was confirming and justifying the building of our little 'Blessed Sacrament Chapel', which is incorporated into our new Church in Carrickfergus. It also confirms for all of us the need for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, which we in our Parish have been engaged in for a number of years now. I would encourage everyone to make a special effort during this 'Eucharistic Year' to make some time for prayer before the Blessed

Sacrament either in Whitehead or Carrickfergus. Offer that time of prayer for the needs of our Parish, our Community, and for an increase in vocations to the Priesthood, Religious Life and Lay Ministry.

And then, of course, who could forget our Parish mission, held during the first week of Advent and conducted by Fr. John Hanna, Fr. Brendan Mulhall and Brigid McCormack from the Redemptorist Community, Clonard Monastery, Belfast. What a truly grace-filled week that turned out to be. It was a week that will bear much fruit in our Parish in the years to come. Already, the little miracles that Father Hanna spoke of at the beginning of the Mission are beginning to appear, and I have no doubt that others will follow. Congratulations to all

who made the effort to participate in the Parish Mission. To those who were unable to do so, for whatever reason, we hope to be able to give you the opportunity once again some time in the not-too-distant future. Sincere thanks to the Redemptorist Mission Team for helping us to renew our faith.

Now that we have moved in to the New Year, we look forward with hope and anticipation to the new challenges, tasks and opportunities that lie ahead, knowing that in all we do God is with us, encouraging us to persevere. May this New Year bring Happiness, Holiness, Peace and Joy to all in our Parish, our Community, our Country and our World.

Riding high at Christmas

By Michael Johnston

Fr Cosgrove was one of the 150 people who took a trip down memory lane in December at the 'Christmas Reunited' event organised by the St Nicholas' Reunited Committee.

The night of nostalgia on the Thursday before Christmas was part St Nicholas' Secondary School reunion and part parish-wide function.

It had the theme of being together at Christmas time and the packed evening included a mulled wine

reception, full Christmas dinner, the re-creation of a typical 70s-style living room, a Powerpoint photo presentation and a visit from a certain Mr S. Clause who presented all the good little boys and girls at the Quality Hotel with a Christmas gift.

The 70s-style room was decked out with period decorations and trimmings. Under its Christmas tree was what many children longed and wished for at the time - a Chopper bike.

There is no truth at all in the rumour that Fr Cosgrove



had to be restrained from riding the bike home. However, as you can see from our

picture, he definitely enjoyed the experience.

Widely appreciated by everyone attending, the event concluded with a cascade of white balloons and a soulful rendition of 'White Christmas'.

The St Nicholas' Reunited committee will again be organising the 2005 Family Football Challenge and may also widen its remit in the coming year to include other social events for the parish.

Lourdes Primary School open afternoon

By Michael Keenan

Lourdes Primary School continues to go from strength to strength.

This year P1 has eight pupils, which is our highest intake for several years. They, along with

the other children, have enjoyed very busy and enjoyable term.

Already the school is looking forward to next year, as parents of pre-school children apply for entry to the school. The school is holding its annual Open Afternoon on Thursday 13th

January 2005, between 1.00 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. Parents of children born between 2nd July 2000 and 1st July 2001 are particularly welcome on this day. Please contact the school for more information: 9337 2444.

Double whammy

By Bridget Murray

Cells, also known as small groups or home groups, are an effective way of passing on the Christian faith in these modern times.

And Catholics are not the only ones to have discovered this fact. This was clearly evident at the 'double whammy' event in the parish community centre in October. Not only did our own parish cells come together for our joint meeting, but we were also joined by members of cells and small groups from other churches in the area. What an evening! Speakers from Downshire Presbyterian, St Colman's Church of Ireland, and Gateway Church, as well as from the parish, shared something of how they were using and experiencing small groups in their context. This was followed by group discussion which considered two key questions – What does my cell/small group mean to me? and What would I gain from visiting a cell/small group in another church?

Sharing these questions with some of the young adults from Gateway Church was an eye-opener for me. I discovered many similarities between us - our desire to learn more about God's love and to talk about burning issues of faith; to get to know new friends in the church; to be challenged in our faith in our everyday lives; and to have a group of people to whom we can turn for prayer support. We had so much in common and we all agreed that we would miss our cell/home group if it didn't happen.

And what would I gain from visiting another cell? A lot. Mainly it would be an opportunity to spend time with a group of people from another faith family who love the same God I love and want to know more and more about Him. Reading the Bible together, praying together, discussing faith issues from our different perspectives would be challenging and stimulating. But the most exciting thing for me would be getting to know people from a different church background as friends, having a cup of tea and a chat together. It's a bit like getting to know the next-door neighbours – you

can only know them as friends after you spend time in their homes and had a yarn or two with them. Or a bit like visiting another country – your eyes are opened to new insights and understandings which leave you feeling the richer for it.

An invitation was extended to all – to consider visiting a cell or home group in another church in Carrickfergus or Whitehead. It was left up to the individual or our own groups to decide whose cell we would like to visit and when. The parish's young adult group, which I am involved with, have decided to take up the invitation. We are going to meet with counterparts from a number of churches on 19 January – that's going to be a mega get-together and anyone is welcome to join us on the night. The more the merrier. Watch the bulletin for details.

- The young adult group meets every fortnight in Louise's house – we're having a fantastic time and have welcomed lots of new people since the summer. Come along for an evening. Phone: Louise 028 93329424; John 028 90506837 ; Bridget 028 90860915

First unity pilgrims

By John Fletcher

There were eight of us who travelled to St John's Church of Ireland in Islandmagee, some from our parish and the others were from Clonard.

We were warmly welcomed by the parishioners of that parish and by the vicar Rev Mark Taylor.

The service was Holy Communion, as we were given prayer books on entering the church we were able to easily follow the service. How very

much was so familiar! We were disappointed to be unable to fully participate in this celebration.

We were there to help build bridges but the keystone was missing.

This was emphasised at the joint service (of many churches in Carrickfergus) which was held in St Colman's on the Larne road that same evening. At this service we were able to play a full part in the proceedings.

- See the back page for more on the unity pilgrims

Christmas dinner

By Paddy Stewart

Around 120 people enjoyed the annual Christmas dinner in the tranquil surroundings of the Glenavna House Hotel, Whiteabbey, on Sunday 5 December.

Parishioners from Greenisland came along as well, as has become the tradition since Greenisland moved outside the previous Parish boundaries.

After everyone settled down with their favorite drink from the bar, Fr Cosgrove welcomed everyone to the hotel, recited grace and then the festivities began. There was plenty of craic to be had around the

tables in the banqueting room, as people renewed old friendships and discussed the approaching Christmas and New Year period.

After the excellent meal Louis Small again provided the afternoon's entertainment. Louis is a familiar and welcome entertainer in the Parish, and he entertained the crowd with his popular choice of songs, interspersed with his usual friendly banter.

The afternoon entertainment finished around 5.30 p.m. With acquaintances renewed, we all took our leave, refreshed and looking forward to getting together again in the coming year.

Mission accomplished

by Gerardine Stewart

There was an excellent turn out to the Mission held in the parish recently, with many people attending Mass in the mornings and the service each evening.

The Redemptorist leaders for the week were warm and dynamic people, catering for everyone from nine to ninety, as Fr. John Hanna said one morning. There were Dawn Masses laid on for the workers, and some school children made what must have been a big sacrifice by getting up early and attending 6.30 a.m. Mass in their school uniforms.

The sick and elderly were visited in their homes and in the nursing homes. There were reconciliation services, and a Mass for the sick, who were anointed during that special service. The young were not forgotten either, as Brigid visited the schools and taught the children a very uplifting song and a really beautiful mime similar to St. Patrick's Breastplate. The children showed us what they had learned during their Mass one morning, and they also did the readings and psalm. We felt so proud of them, and rightly so.

At each evening service the missionaries told great jokes (according to the children who attended), and amusing, thought provoking little stories. Then we sang beautiful hymns and said a special prayer, which helped us to think and to pray during the rest of the evening's service.

At one of the Masses, Fr. Hanna said he "did not believe young people weren't being called any more, it was just they could not hear the call with all the noise, distraction and busyness of the modern world".

Another message that has stayed with parishioners is how faith cannot always be a private matter between an individual and God. It is good to share faith with others, opening yourself up to what God is saying to you through other people. If you are like the man in the story, behind all the barricades and locked doors, then God finds it more difficult to slip one of his love letters through to you.

It was a great Mission, and I'm sure everyone who attended it renewed their commitment to follow Christ, and felt a strong sense of community being built. I know we will see the fruits of the Mission in the coming year.

Bereavement Group there for all

By X

The Parish Bereavement Support Group has been meeting once a month on a Tuesday evening, for prayer, study and planning.

Over the last few months visits have been made to families who have recently been bereaved. If requested, by the bereaved or members of the family circle further visits are made. It is hoped that these visits are a support and help during this difficult time.

A personalised Parish Sympathy Card is left on the

initial visit. On the card is the mission statement of the group: *We are one parish, one community and the death of one is the concern of all.*

A little booklet, *Your Journey through Grief*, also designed by the group, is left in each home. Copies are available in St Nicholas' and Our Lady of Lourdes churches - please feel free to take a copy for yourself or to pass on to a friend.

This year the Mass of the bereaved was celebrated on 17th December and like last year's Eucharist was a source of great comfort. This special

memorial Mass was dedicated to those who had died in our Parish in the past year and for the intentions of their families.

The following reflection, from this Mass, is a source of hope for us all.

Night is coming on. The last birds fly hurriedly to their nests.

Slowly but surely darkness takes possession of the world.

However, no sooner has darkness fallen, that the lights begin to come on – below us, around us, above us, near us and far away from us – a candle in a window, a lamp in a cellar, a beacon in a lighthouse,

a star in the sky. And so we take heart and find our way again.

When a good person dies darkness descends on us. We feel lost, bereft, forlorn. But gradually the lights begin to come on as we recall the good deeds done by the deceased. They spring up all over the place. We are amazed at how much light is generated. In this strange and beautiful light we not only find our way, but find the meaning of life itself.

The Group are sincerely thankful to the ladies of St Nicholas', who provided the refreshments after Mass.

Get together for cell groups

By Patrick Quinlan

Last year's cell group meetings culminated in a joint cell group get together held at St Nicholas' Hall in Carrickfergus in X.

The evening began with a delicious buffet meal continued with a quiz and

culminated in a variety act. A round of the quiz concentrated on our beloved Fr Cosgrove and we found out amongst other things that his favourite hobbies are golf, cycling and swimming. The variety acts combined comedy, musicology and ingenuity.

Fr Cosgrove provided an excellent stand up routine in

between his guitar playing and singing, whilst Linda Mellon, Roisin White and Martin Murray were also to the fore in providing entertainment. Finally Linda and Robin gave a speed lesson in origami which had everyone folding and refolding their napkins in a fervour of creativity.

Many thanks to the Steering Group of Margaret Webb, Gerardine Stewart, Bob Stuart, Philomena Cunningham and Hugh Murray for organising the evening and a special thanks to Bob who is stepping down from the group after many years of involvement.

The Journey in Understanding goes on

By Morris Gault

I love to go on holiday. When my children were small, I loved the 1st July as we headed off in the car to Larne and on to some part of France two days hence. The journey was well known, with stops at Little Chef's and motorway service areas to keep us well fed and then the Travel Lodge at Ashford for a good night's rest before the Tunnel in the morning. Then off we went, driving on the wrong side of the road.

Some people tell me they could never drive there, that it would be too confusing, but I find that it's not a problem now. Once you have tried it, it becomes almost second nature.

I'm told that getting to know 'the other sort' is too confusing, that it muddies the water, that it might be misunderstood and why would you want to do it anyway!

I confess that for far too long I was in that camp, until God started to challenge me

through reading the Gospels. On a number of occasions Jesus talked to Samaritans, 'the other sort'. He told a story about a Good Samaritan and he refused to bypass Samaria, as all good Jews were supposed to.

Why did he do it? I asked myself. The answer seemed so obvious, because he loved them as much as he loved his own people. So then came

the uncomfortable questions. Morris, who are your Samaritans? Who are the people you are avoiding?

So, with Father Michael, Mike McCann and Roy Crowe, we began a journey that has led us to some interesting places. We have talked about faith, shared some scones and a few jokes. We have been on a couple of Journey in Understanding

courses, with a new one starting in January. Most significantly, we have worshipped together, and it has not been all that confusing at all!

So the journey goes on, and where it will lead God only knows, but the scary first steps are over and I'm looking forward to the next stop and new relationships being built.

Life in the choir at Lourdes

By Kathleen Mc Kenna, who shares a few thoughts on the Whitehead Choir

There is a howling gale outside and the rain is pouring down – it's Tuesday so it must be choir practice night!

When we arrive up in the gallery of Our Lady of Lourdes Church – Eilish, our organist is already there and the nine of us join her. There is the usual discussion of everyday events and all our personal updates on families, etc, but Eilish quickly gets us back on track to practise the hymns for the following Sunday Mass and at this time of the year we are getting ready for Advent and Christmas.

Sometimes we feel challenged when we have to learn new hymns but, for some of us,

we can remember having to sing the Mass in Latin and that puts everything into perspective.

Being a member of the choir requires both hard work and dedication and coming to practice on a Tuesday night can be difficult for some of the members who have other commitments, but it is all worth the effort.

We are few in number, just like a little family, and some of us are of a more mature age but we feel it is a privilege to offer up the Mass in this special way as leading the congregation in praise of God.

All of us enjoy singing and are grateful to Fr Cosgrove for his support and encouragement with his singing during Sunday Mass and other ceremonies during the year.

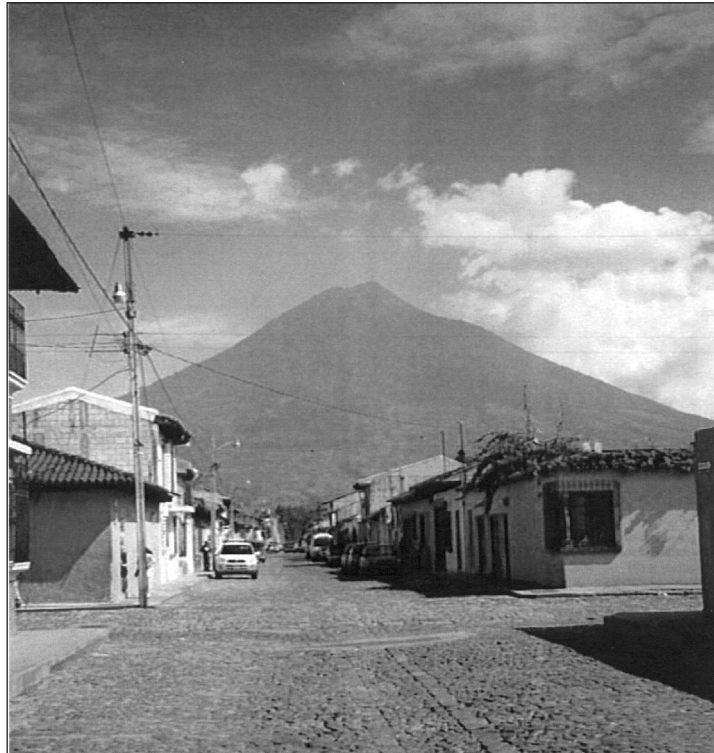
Mid-winter mornings - Guatamalan style

The writer of this article is Alasdair Cunningham from Whitehead who, after spending a year volunteering part-time with Oxfam Ireland, decided to travel to Guatemala to work as a volunteer with a grassroots organisation fighting for sustainable development. At present he is working with ADIPSA, a Guatemalan charity. He is living with a family in San Agustin, where over 60 per cent of the inhabitants live in poverty.

Sunday is market day in San Agustin, Central Guatemala. You have to get up early if you want to get your hands on the best stuff since from the wee early hours, even before the ubiquitous village cocks have begun their daily litany, herds of people make their way down from communities dotted across the sierra above the town.

The weekly jaunt fulfils three purposes – to buy up provisions for the week, - sell the leftovers produced from the land in the last seven days – and attend morning Mass. Some come on foot, a trek of several hours each way; others on mule, whilst the majority pack like sardines into the back of pick-ups which herd them along the bumpy dirt tracks - I once counted 25 people on a Toyota pick-up – a lot more than those who would get on a 52-seater bus at Whitehead. I remember wondering at the time would Ulsterbus not run one of its Goldliner services on the routes linking the communities of San Agustin.

My Guatemalan family's house is on the far side of town and on the main route in from the mountain. It's just after 6am as I sit on the dusty road outside sipping the finest coffee, fresh from the small plantations high up in the sierra above, and brewed from beans recently picked, depulped and roasted by the small farmers from the local co-operative, where I have been working as a volunteer for the past eight months. I watch, bemused, as stragglers file past on their way to the market: local women who, in an amazing display of dexterity and cranial strength,



The street in San Agustin, where Alisdair Cunningham lives

move along, gracefully balancing on their head huge loads of lemons, bananas, mangos, or any of a hundred other types of exotic fruit native to this land which don't have an English translation; children struggle to keep up, burdened with half a dozen shrieking chickens who incongruously pop their heads out from all angles of the netting; others drag along pigs in an unholy squealing match. The men proceed more solemnly, bent double under crippling sacks of potatoes. Others move along more lightly, but far from happy, since the pace of the emaciated old mules they have commissioned to carry their firewood to the market is not to their satisfaction. And so, the muleteers must expend untold amounts of energy, cracking the poor beasts with the whip and issuing all sorts of foul-mouthed abuse.

A little later on, I find myself rushing out of the house in order to avoid the preparations for the day's festival. Today is the 12th December – the feast of the Virgin of Guadeloupe, when all the children under seven dress in traditional Guatemalan garb and take part in the procession bringing the Virgin to the local church. The

precise thing I am keen to avoid is the preparing of four chickens for a huge stew which will be served this afternoon as the centre of the family celebrations. As I announce that I'm off to the market, I watch little Angie and Carlos chasing the squawking round the coop outside my bedroom. Kin Kin is standing ready with string to tie the victims by the feet and hang them upside down on the washing line where I have sensibly removed my boxer shorts just moments earlier. Rosanna waits with a carving knife. This is a scene I have already experienced and have no wish to relive.

Trying to put aside images of headless chickens, I set off to the marketplace. On the lookout for Santiago who every week brings a jeep load of the most delicious pineapples from the low coastal lands, I dodge my way through the crowd, ducking under the black bin bags which serve as shade from the already powerful 'winter' sun. It's certainly cooler now than those infernal days back to June and July, but still it's a strange place for someone who grew up accustomed to chilly breezes off the east Antrim coast, a point confirmed by the little kids who stop whatever

they're doing to take a good look at such a strange looking foreigner. My anxiety at missing out on my weekly pineapple ration is dispelled when I see two of the beauties lying in the back of Santiago's pick-up. I thank him for having just enough for me, paying up the five Quetzales or 35p, and make my way to the makeshift chapel. (The main church has been closed for repairs for the last 10 years, the village square for the last three. No one seems to know when or if either will be reopened). The corrugated iron roof of the temporary church and the congregation of several hundred make the atmosphere stifling. Two fans ruffle the priest's soutane from either side of the altar up front, but they sadly have no effect at the back where I stand sweating buckets, and looking down at the pineapples by my feet and wishing for an ice-cold smoothie. It's hard to make out what the priest is saying as he is vying for airplay with the loud speakers outside which boom out meringue music and announcements for the latest special offers at the market stalls outside. For a moment, I focus my attention on what's on offer: pills and potions to remedy anything from gastritis and arthritis to diarrhoea and menopause. Shark liver oil is also available, but as the gong booms out up front calling people to communion, I miss out on which ailment it cures. Towards the end of Mass, news of the bargain of the week reaches my ear – three watermelons for five Quetzales. I make my way outside into the now sweltering heat and order up the watermelons. It is then that I wonder how I will get my load of fruit home. I ask the vendor if he couldn't help me out with a mule or donkey. (I have to admit that before coming to Guatemala I never quite knew the difference between the two.) To my surprise, he says to hold on and that he might be able to get me one. A little concerned, I explain that I'm only joking, pay up the five Quetzales quickly, before that donkey has a chance to appear.

Transforming your life

By Marie Mone

"The church of the future will be built up from small communities"

(Karl Rahner)

On Saturday 10 July 2004, cell members from Carrickfergus and Whitehead, travelled down to Dublin to attend the Cell course 'Transforming your Life'.

The Jesuit Conference Centre, Ranelagh, was the venue. Father Michael Hurley, now Parish Priest of Leixlip (a Dublin parish), hosted the meeting. In 1990 Father Hurley brought the vision of Cell Groups from Milan to Ireland.

The main speaker at the Venue was Monsignor Mike Eivers. Monsignor Eivers is prominent in the American Catholic Cell movement. Monsignor Eivers serves as Parish Priest of St Edward's Church, Florida and he was delighted to be back in the land of his birth.

There were representatives of Cells from all over Ireland, both North and South. A number of people attended the conference who were interested in joining Cells and starting up a Cell system in their Parish.

During the conference a "Cell Group" shared their own unique Cell stories, told of how their lives had changed and

their faith was strengthened as a result of belonging to a Cell. Parishioners grew closer and the Parish benefited. Our Group found it easy to identify with this "Cell". It was a great day for the Irish Cell Movement.

At the end of the conference, we joined in a concelebrated Mass. The Eucharist we shared was meaningful and unifying.

The day renewed our confidence in our prayer life and the five of us came away with a belief that we belonged not only to a Cell in our Parish, but to a larger Group who cared about us - our expectations and our anxieties. We were encouraged, especially by Monsignor Eivers, to have

sufficient insight to take up the challenge of evangelisation and to remember the "Vocation of the Laity", is to make the Parish the "Family of God". Both Monsignor Eivers and Father Hurley emphasised their belief that Cell Groups seek to help the parish community and are committed to reaching out to all.

The Cell movement has so much to offer our Parish. Our cells in Carrickfergus and Whitehead are groups of ordinary people who come together in homes, to praise God, listen to his Word, share his Word and reach out to all in our Parish and the wider community.

Forever Friends trip of a lifetime

by Patrick Stewart

During the autumn, I went to America with Friends Forever, a group in Carrick Borough Council area. We left on Sunday 17 October and returned on Monday 1 November. The group was made up of 4 boys and 6 girls, half Protestant and half Catholic. We lived mainly in the house of an American who was a member of the local Rotary Club in Portsmouth, New England. His name was Wally. Norman, who works for Carrick Council, and Carol travelled with us. We met an American called Courtney who works for Friends Forever in America. Courtney drove us everywhere as she knew her way around.

After our long flight to Boston, we went to our house, unpacked and relaxed for the rest of that day. On Monday morning we got up about 9:00 and went for a trolley ride to the seacoast. The trolley was like a bus with windows which could unzip. When we got back we had lunch and went shopping.

We spent all of Tuesday and Wednesday at a ropes course. PJ was the leader and he showed us what to do. We went on 3 different challenges on Tuesday and 3 more on Wednesday as well as playing lots of games. They were all quite hard but loads of fun.

On Thursday we went to the first Rotary meeting for breakfast and three of us made speeches about life in Carrick. Then we went to the fire and police department. We were taught some fire safety and then watched a demonstration of dog training. We saw a dog leave the police car and chase a man pretending to be a criminal. It was excellent.

On Friday we climbed Mount Chocorua. Craig took us up and down again. That was very strenuous, yet great fun.

Getting ready for a bit of High Flying: (Back row left to right) Adam Creighton, Lizzie Bogue, Stefaine Morton, Rachel Murray, Peter Cowan and Lacie Neeson (Carrick) Paddy Stewart and Adele English (Whitehead). Front row Danielle Harrison and Jonny Mulligan.



Saturday was more relaxing. We painted a peace promoting mural with the New Outlook Teen Centre. Then we went to Mass. In the evening we went to a UNH hockey match, which was fantastic.

On Sunday we went to a Protestant service and went shopping again. On Monday we went to Exeter High School to see what American Schools were like. It starts very early, at 7.00 and ends at 2.30. After school we made Halloween costumes with the school kids. On Tuesday morning we went for plane rides and then antique car rides. They were amazing. Later we went out with American families who took us out for a night. We were put in groups of two and went with 5 different families. We all had a great time.

On Wednesday we went into Boston and went for a Ducks tour. A Duck is a bus which can drive around the town, and then drive in the water as well. Our tour guide was Friendly Frank. He was very funny and friendly and knew a lot of the

history of Boston. Later we went home and relaxed. On Thursday morning there was a huge surprise. We were getting a limo ride to a rotary lunch. It was class and very comfortable. We went shopping one last time and then out with families again in different groups.

On Friday we went to Winnacunnet High School. We spent most of the day there and then went to a Haunted House.

Saturday was our final day. We relaxed in the afternoon but in the evening we went trick-or-treating with the Interact group in Exeter. That night we went to a going away costume party at Renee's house. It was great.

On Sunday we packed for going home and we tidied Wally's house. We left Boston at 7.30 and arrived home early Monday morning.

Overall, the trip was an Amazing once in a lifetime experience which I will never forget.

Inter-church Advent service

By Pat Quinn

On the 5th December, the Christian Community in Carrickfergus, held its Inter Church Advent service at St. Colman's Church of Ireland, Larne Road.

I was invited to come along to experience the work being carried out by the parishioners in our parish, in association with other churches in and around the borough.

Having finally found a space in the overflowing car park, I proceeded to enter the church, nervously wondering where I would sit. Then, having found a seat near the front things started to roll shortly after seven o'clock.

I was encouraged to see so many of our parishioners from Carrickfergus and Whitehead attending and also present were other local ministers, including the Rev. Maurice Gault, Roy Crowe and Steve Ames.

The Rev. Mike McCann, warmly welcomed everybody and soon the service began with the choir leading with the opening hymn "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord." After the opening prayers, the Word 'Psalm 84' was sung, so beautifully, that I could have listened to it for longer.

But things had to press on, and our own Father Michael Cosgrove was reading the sermon. Having climbed! the pulpit, Father soon had the congregation at ease with a

few jokes before moving on to the evening's main theme.

He spoke of the story of Jesus and how it related very much, as to what all of us have been trying to do in Carrickfergus over the last number of years.

He recounted how Jesus left the hillside village of Nazareth where he had grown up, and he settled down in Capernaum, by the lakeside, where a fisherman named Peter had his home. From then on his principal occupation would be preaching, teaching, healing, calling people to repentance, and training others to follow in his footsteps. Jesus moved among people healing the sick, comforting the distressed and tirelessly proclaiming the Good News.

In a world torn apart by strife, greed and pride, his words brought hope and directed people towards conversion and salvation. People were drawn by his presence. They travelled for miles to hear his message, to listen to his word. They sat entranced for hours as he explained the deepest mysteries of heaven in the simplest way possible.

Small wonder that sinners were among his most enthusiastic fans. They desperately wanted what he promised, - a fresh start and a new beginning. Above all he restored damaged souls, offered forgiveness and

comfort to sinners, and took away their doubt and their despair.

It has often been said that God moves in mysterious ways and uses the weak to confront the strong. When he set about selecting his disciples, Jesus looked for them among ordinary, run of the mill people who lived ordinary everyday lives. The disciples didn't know what they were letting themselves in for, but when Jesus called, they were ready to take risks and they became a God-driven force that would change the world.

Father Michael then continued to tell us about the work that we are called to do and how people can play their part as messengers of the Good News.

An example of this, has been shown in the last two weekends when Parishioners from our own Parish of St Nicholas', joined with Parishioners from Clonard Monastery and prayed with 10 different congregations in Carrickfergus and Whitehead at their Sunday morning Services. Something that would not have been possible a few years ago.

During this time, various members of the parish embarked upon a journey that began very slowly, very cautiously, almost timidly. Small in number, there was no great plan for the future, but over time people joined together and encouraged

others to travel along the road of love, and truth, and faith.

In a world of darkness, where people are living lives of quiet desperation, fearful of the future and searching to make sense of it all, our presence can brighten up the road ahead with reassurance and peace. We are reminded that, as members of the Body of Christ, we have a role to play and a job to do. If we take our personal call seriously and have the courage to respond, then the Kingdom of God will surely be in our midst.

Father Michael finished by saying that, 'Now we can say with growing conviction that we are, "The Church of Jesus Christ, meeting this evening in St Colman's Church of Ireland, Carrickfergus, for the glory of God and the good of his people."' "

Father Michael's sermon was well received and brought a feeling of warmth to the hearts of the congregation gathered at St. Colman's.

After listening and participating in the final prayers and hymns, the evening was extended by our host, the Rev. Mike McCann, with an invitation to all present to join in the hall next door for tea.

We were all very grateful for the hospitality shown by the Parish of St. Colman's for their work and organisation into this special evening.

Obituary

PATRICK MULLEN 26.04.33 – 13.09.04

Pat Mullen was born in Larne in May 1933 and died in Carrickfergus in September 2004.

At Pat's funeral we were reminded of the untimely death of his younger son Lee... and like Chris, we rejoice in our belief that they are now reunited, in God's kingdom.

Pat and Chris were happily married for 51 years. They had three children – two sons and a daughter, Sean, Michelle and Lee, and three grandchildren. Pat loved his three grandchildren and was proud to relate stories about them.

Pat's childhood was spent in Larne, where he attended St MacNissi's Boys' School. On leaving school he went into the building trade. Pat was very successful in his chosen occupation. He was a self-employed builder who took real pride in his work.

Pat, was not only a renowned builder, but a much acclaimed bowler. He spent many happy and competitive hours on the bowling greens throughout the district. Carrickfergus Bowling Club honoured him, when they elected him as Chairman of the Club, a position he served in for one year. Pat's other sporting interest was football. He was a keen supporter of United and a loyal supporter of Preston North End.

Some of us will remember Pat through his involvement in our Parish. He was a member of our Pastoral Council with a special interest in ecumenical work. His other great interest was the Praise Group. From 1998, until the onset of his illness Pat regularly attended the Parish Praise evenings in Whitehead. He had a great love for the Psalms, where he found a God of infinite goodness.

He, along with Pat Barry RIP, attended their first Pastoral Council Meeting in November 1997; today they still do their work for the Parish, but in a different place. The Pastoral Council Minutes for the 16th May 2000 record "we will keep Pat in our prayers" ... may the two Pats continue praying for our Parish.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

CHILDREN'S LITURGY
By Mary McAuley

"Gerardine Stewart introduced me to the Children's Liturgy Programme in our Church in Whitehead. I am grateful to her for this introduction as I really love being with the group of children in Our Lady of Lourdes.

"I started as an assistant to Louise and from the very start I was impressed by the enthusiasm and the attitude of the young children. The children's willingness to participate and their refreshing frank questioning made me look at my approach to my own faith life. Helping the children and now leading their liturgy on Sunday mornings has been a most rewarding experience. As I help them to learn about Jesus and help them to understand the Word of God I know that my faith has grown."

Last issue winners

LINKING WORDS
COMPETITION

There were no correct solutions. However, the prize is awarded to **Edel Stewart**, Whitehead for the nearest correct solution—only 1 incorrect word. Well done Edel.

By request we will return to our WORD SEARCH competition!

Find the Harry Potter words

1. HOGWART EXPRESS
2. FIREBOLT
3. FAT FRIAR
4. ENGORGIO
5. DUDLEY DURSLEY
6. DEMENTORS
7. BOGGART
8. BUTTERBEER
9. GRINGOTTS
10. MUGGLE
11. JAMES POTTER
12. PORTKEY
13. TROLL
14. PEPARO
15. SQUIB
16. PROFESSOR SPROUT
17. VOLDEMORT
18. NEWT
19. OWL
20. PARCELMOUTH
21. QUIDDITCH

V	V	Z	H	S	P	B	R	E	P	A	R	O	R	P	P
O	I	E	O	D	R	B	U	T	T	E	R	B	E	E	R
L	D	X	G	I	O	D	E	M	E	N	T	O	R	S	M
D	U	P	W	S	F	W	B	E	N	G	O	R	G	I	O
E	D	E	A	A	E	P	E	D	P	D	S	J	O	N	X
M	L	L	R	P	S	H	J	A	A	E	Q	A	I	E	S
O	E	L	T	P	S	P	F	I	R	A	U	M	Q	W	A
R	Y	I	E	A	O	O	I	L	C	T	I	E	U	T	A
T	D	A	X	R	R	R	R	Y	E	H	B	S	I	F	B
Z	U	R	P	A	S	T	E	P	L	D	M	P	D	A	O
D	R	N	R	T	P	K	B	R	M	A	U	O	D	T	G
T	S	U	E	E	R	E	O	O	O	Y	G	T	I	F	G
R	L	S	S	U	O	Y	L	P	U	O	G	T	T	R	A
O	E	A	S	K	U	Y	T	H	T	W	L	E	C	I	R
L	Y	F	G	I	T	H	D	E	H	L	E	R	H	A	T
L	A	G	R	I	N	G	O	T	T	S	Q	V	M	R	J

- Circle the words, then cut the puzzle out and leave it in the sacristy (don't forget your name and telephone number).
First correct solution out of the hat wins a £10.00 book token!

NAME.....

TELEPHONE.....

If you ever get the chance take it up, says Matthew

By Matthew Stuart

In January 2004, my RE teacher, Father Colin Grant told a group of students at Aquinas Grammar School that we had been chosen to visit the USA in July. At the time, this sounded fun - almost like winning the lottery. It was only over the following four months of preparation that I became aware of the work that would be involved. We were going as part of a cross-community group of about one hundred

Catholics and Protestants, boys and girls going to the US, not for a holiday, but to face our own beliefs and prejudices as well as those held by our hosts. Ultimately, we would work not just on our own issues, but also with homeless people, young children and young adults from under-privileged backgrounds, and on a variety of environmental construction projects.

Knowing that this work lay ahead was one thing, but in all honesty, it wasn't until I was on

the flight to Toronto that I appreciated how it felt to know that I wasn't going to see my family for five weeks, and that I would be living in someone else's house, depending on their hospitality and generosity. However, at 30,000 feet above the North Atlantic I quickly realised that the time for changing my mind had passed.

To tell the whole story of my time on the Ulster Project would take me several pages of this newsletter and I don't think I could adequately express the

welcome offered to me by people who started as complete strangers and became a second family to me for those five weeks. However, I would say unreservedly that if you ever get the chance to lose control of your life for five weeks, to work with those who have less than you, and to explore those things that life has taught you, do what I did and take up that opportunity.

Unity pilgrims visit local churches

On the two Sundays of the recent parish mission, Fr Gerry Reynolds and a group of lay people from Clonard Monastery invited parishioners from Carrick and Whitehead to accompany them, as they joined the regular Sunday morning worship of a number of Churches in the area.

Fr Gerry had written to the churches asking if a visit would be convenient at this time and no less than 10 invitations were received back. The following churches welcomed the visit of the Unity Pilgrims.

- Elim Pentecostal church, Carrick
- Baptist church, North Road, Carrick
- Gateway church, Carrick
- Methodist church, Carrick
- Joymount Presbyterian church, Carrick
- St Colman's Church of Ireland, Carrick
- Downshire Presbyterian church, Carrick
- Whitehead Church of Ireland
- Whitehead Baptist church
- St John's Church of Ireland, Islandmagee

Here Martin Murray reflects on a first time visit to Carrickfergus Elim along with the Unity Pilgrims.

No pews is good news

"Carrickfergus Elim Penetcostal Church sits on the corner of Northlands and North Road at the top of Sunnyslans. I have driven past it many times and wondered, what's it like in there? What kind of reception would someone of my religious persuasion get if they were ever to visit there? What order of service do they have? Which kind of message is preached?"

"I got all my questions answered when on the first Sunday morning of our parish mission my wife Bridget, her brother John and myself joined with Maureen, Geraldine and Paddy of the Clonard Unity Pilgrims on a visit to their Sunday morning service at 11am.

"The welcome could not have been warmer. Any apprehension I came with quickly melted away when we were

welcomed by the Pastor, George Redmond who was making his way around the congregation with a tin of sweets. He later openly introduced and welcomed us as people from St Nicholas' and from Clonard. It was also great to see some familiar faces of friends we knew already from the monthly Intercessors for Carrick and Worship Watch meetings.

"Barriers were being broken in more ways than one that day, as the congregation were getting a first experience of the new loose chairs that had just been installed to replace the tradition church pews. Well you know the saying 'No pews is good news'.

"The first part of the service was given over to an extended time of worship in song, led by a very talented group of young musicians and singers complete with guitars, keyboard and full drum kit. The music varied from high celebration right through to sensitive reflection. Words were provided on a screen on the wall, making hymn sheets unnecessary.



Fr Gerry Reynolds (far right) pictured with XXXX

"This was followed by communion during which people in the congregation were free to pray or share a passage of scripture from where they stood or sat.

"A sermon followed. This was not given by the Pastor, but by a retired lay person who was training for the ministry. Part of me was expecting a hard, uncompromising, moralistic message, but that wasn't that we got. Instead it was down to earth, practical and humorous.

"Again the big screen on the wall was used to highlight the important parts of the sermon.

"The hour and a half service passed quickly and I came out wondering why I had been so apprehensive on the way in. The people we met were just ordinary people like ourselves, doing their best to honour and please God. As we said our goodbyes we were already looking forward to returning for the Worship Watch meeting which is being hosted in the Elim for the first time on Friday 11th March 2005. Why not come with us?"

How unity pilgrims began

by Fr Gerry Reynolds

"On Memorial Sunday in November 1994 I decided, on a sudden impulse, to go on my own from Clonard Monastery to worship with a congregation of the Church in the Shankill. I cannot remember now which one it was. It just seemed right to me that I should worship together with them on that special Sunday. The IRA cease-fire had been announced on August 31st and the Loyalist cease-fire had followed on October 13th.

"Some grace drew me back on the following Sundays to visit other Shankill congregations and share in their worship. Gradually I began to bring others with me - initially Catholic members of Cornerstone Community.

"We arranged the day of the visit with the minister beforehand. We have been present in Shankill congregations for the celebration of Holy Communion, for Baptisms, for Harvest Services and for Memorial Services honouring those who died in the Great Wars. But generally the worship we shared was an ordinary Sunday Service with hymns, prayers, readings from scripture, an offering and a sermon.

"Initially for all the Catholic pilgrims the journey to the Shankill involved some fear of the unknown. But for those who continue making the pilgrimages, the fear has given way to a sense of blessing and of privilege. We recognise we are going to a holy place 'Where two or three are

gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them'. We have a sense that in this simple gesture God is using us and that through the pilgrimages the Spirit is at work leading us into a deeper communion in Christ, breaking down old walls of separation. Where it is leading all of us, we leave to God's unfolding. The characteristic of 'unity pilgrims', their gift to the Church, is a dynamic 'yearning' for the unity of Christians. Unless we 'yearn' for this great gift of God, we are very unlikely to do anything to bring it about. Yearning creates an energy in our hearts for the work of reconciliation.

"Just as parishes have Ministers of the Word and Ministers of the Eucharist, I wish that each Catholic parish would

have a group of 'unity pilgrims' and mandate them to link the parish congregation with other congregations of the Church. The unity of the Church is realised in friendship and in prayer before it is worked out in doctrinal agreements and legal arrangements. The parishioners who become 'unity pilgrims' take on a certain leadership in this great project.

"If the 'yearning' is in the hearts of its members, each congregation of the Church will easily develop a group of 'unity pilgrims' to act on its behalf. To form such a group is a sign that a local congregation understands the loving and compassionate heart of God for our divided world."