

The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



MAY 2021

From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

It was wonderful to be able to use St George's for public worship in time for Good Friday and Easter. The relaxing of some of the Coronavirus restrictions came to us as a relief and as a welcome opportunity to gather together once again for services. A lot of individuals worked hard to ensure everything was in accordance with the medical guidelines and the building properly prepared. I want to say a particular word of thanks to the Churchwardens, Select Vestry and our musicians for everything they did to ensure that the Easter services went as well as they did. In particular I am very grateful to the Director of Music, David Falconer, Maeve Falconer-Morris and the choirs for the wonderful singing we heard over that weekend. The Easter-Eve liturgy with Confirmation was the first visit to St George's by our new Bishop, the Rt Rev'd George Davison. There were 13 adults confirmed by him, all converts to the faith who had come from Iran. They had all been prepared very carefully for Baptism and Confirmation by Fr Graeme Pollock and Meisam Khalili. Some of them were ready for confirmation in 2020 but had to wait a year because of Covid-19. The Bishop was delighted that so many adults had accepted the Christian Faith and said it was the largest Confirmation group he has confirmed so far. Over the last 4 years about 30 Iranian adults have been baptised and confirmed in St George's. Their preparation is taken very seriously and in recent years has been carried out by Fr Graeme with Meisam's assistance. The Iranians are all very tech-savvy and make extensive use of Skype, Facetime, Zoom and other social media tools to keep in touch and attend Bible studies. Quite a number of Iranians who used to come to St George's have now moved to GB because of work opportunities. I am still in touch with quite a number of them working in London, Sunderland and Hereford. They are working in careers as varied as an Iranian themed confectioners, nursery care and football coaching. They not only keep in touch with me but follow us on the internet and are still in contact with Iranians still living in Belfast. Some even continue to attend on-line Bible studies which they first encountered through St George's facilitated by Mrs Katrin All-davoodi, who is herself training for ordination in the Church of England. There is much more that we can and should be doing to support asylum seekers and refugees, especially those come to the Christian Faith. The most important thing is that we all remain welcoming, encouraging and supportive to everyone who comes to worship with us, so that they will feel welcome in St George's and quickly realise that they are part of the family of God in the parish. There are more practical steps I am considering, which will help overseas members feel more at home and comfortable in church. If you have any ideas about this and are willing to help implement them, then please have a word with me. I hope and pray that the Easter Season will continue to bring you hope and joy in the Resurrection of Christ and that you will be blessed with health and strength. Please do let me know of any sick parishioners or pastoral needs that you are aware of.

Yours in the Risen Christ

Brian Stewart

PARISH NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL VESTRY

At the Annual General Vestry held on Sunday 18th April, the following appointments/elections were made;

CHURCHWARDENS

RECTOR'S Janet Sandikli
PEOPLE'S Eleanor Maynard

GLEBEWARDENS

RECTOR'S Tony Merrick
PEOPLE'S Pam Tilson

SELECT VESTRY

Janice Carruthers	Agape Laoye
Mark Claney	Michael McGlade
Archdeacon Scott Harte	Douglas McIlldoon
Peter Hunter	Fr Graeme Pollock
Matty Jeffrey	Carolyn Rhodes
Chris Jenkins	Madeleine Welsh

THE WALSINGHAM GROUP

Our monthly meetings of the Walsingham Group have resumed at a celebration of the Eucharist on the last Thursday of the month at 1.00pm; the next meeting will be on the 29th April.

It would be our intention to make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham later this year, but due to Covid-19 and its associated travel uncertainties, it is not yet possible to make final plans. However, we would hope to have something more positive to report in the not too distant future.

Fr Graeme Pollock

THE PARISH CHOIR



Welcome to May.

How wonderful that we have been able to sing together again as a choir. Although still not back in the choir stalls, it is such a powerfully moving experience to sing again the music of the liturgy.

The Choir has wintered well, the trebles have been working away each week using Zoom, as indeed have some of the new members of the back row. We have also been able to include those choristers who are isolating and have even been joined weekly by Matthew Huffam from his temporary home in Italy while his father completes a project on location.

Jamie O'Kane and William Magee have now traded their treble positions for those of young men, singing counter tenor and Bass 1 respectively. Jason Poots returns to us as he completes his final exams in Manchester University, and we still reap the benefits of Mr David Stevens on the organ.

Last October, we should have been able to install James, Noah, Joe, Oliver and Nathan as choristers. This wasn't possible, but these young probationers have kept up their interest and have joined in the weekly zoom rehearsals. James joined the choir last year, and Noah has just sung his first few services. We look forward to welcoming them all as choristers in the coming weeks. Although recruitment has not been possible this year, there are a few brothers who we hope to see in September, and we expect to be able to audition in schools next term.

The Choral scholars have been making fabulous progress online and have resumed face to face lessons with Maeve. Both Upper 6th students, Hector and Ben are preparing for their ARSM, the Associated Board post grade 8 singing diploma. Some of the choral scholars will go to the Rudolphus Foundations Courses (formerly known as the Eton Choral courses) this summer.

The death of David McElderry has really shocked us. It has been terribly sad to miss his presence in choir practice, his enthusiasm and appreciation for the boys and men was clear at every rehearsal and service. His smile at certain organ flourishes and clever stop combinations was like a secret shared within our ranks as choristers.

We have challenges ahead. We have to retrain ourselves, to revise how we make our sounds and blend and remember our exceptional privilege to be able to sing liturgical music to our highest possible standards.

Here's hoping for a concert at the end of June.

David and Maeve

YOU CANNOT DO SOCIAL DISTANCING IN AFRICA By Karen Bushby

The Rev Keith Scott and his wife Lyn have spent 10 of the last 19 years living and working in Zambia. Last Christmas, they said a final farewell to their friends and colleagues at the Anglican Seminary of St John the Evangelist in Kitwe and returned to Northern Ireland.



Keith and Lyn Scott

Keith was a parish priest before leaving for Africa in 2002. He spent three years in St Matthew's Parish, Shankill Road, and 14 in the Glens of Antrim, both in the Diocese of Connor.

"We felt we would like to do a spell overseas," he said. "We applied to go to Sierra Leone, but that didn't work out because of the conflict there. Then the opportunity arose to go to Zambia."

Life was not easy, and the family had issues with safe drinking water and power cuts. The shops were poorly stocked, and challenges also included ants, mosquitoes, and even killer snakes. Rivers had to be avoided because of regular crocodile attacks.

When Keith and Lyn first moved to Zambia, they went as a family with their son Adam and daughter Hannah. Keith lectured and Lyn worked in the seminary teaching study skills and advanced English. Keith was also parish priest of Chambishi.

"We stayed for six years and returned at the end of 2008 so the children could continue their education in the UK," said Keith. "Adam went to Liverpool University and Hannah went initially to Methody and then Villiers School when we moved to Limerick, where I was rector of Rathkeale Group of Parishes for seven years.

"When we got back to Ireland in 2008, people were complaining about hardships caused by the financial crisis, yet if the supermarkets and shopping centres were anything to go by, this was a place awash with money. In Zambia, we had just one supermarket."

The couple say they thought their time working for CMSI had ended, but God had different plans, and in 2015 they felt called back to CMSI. "Adam was working in Liverpool and Hanna was in London, so everything was settled and it seemed like the right time," said Keith.

In Kitwe, Lyn and Keith moved back into their old bungalow. "There had been very little maintenance done in the time we had been away," said Lyn. "The water supply was temperamental, the electricity just got worse and worse and during heavy rain the ceiling leaked."

New louvre windows had been installed, but they had been put in upside

down. "If they were open, they directed the rain in through the windows, rather than out!" said Keith. "I had to change all those. I learned a lot of new skills, especially in carpentry and electrical work. Billy Smyth [CMSI mission partner] taught me how to weld. When we left in December the house was in a much better state than when we arrived."

Lyn had taught high level English and literary skills at the seminary, but since they left in 2008, no-one had been able to carry this work on. Some of the courses Keith was teaching had also lapsed, but the students were following a course through a South African seminary.

"The numbers at St John's are tiny," Lyn explained. "When we left in December there were just nine students. The seminary serves the whole of Zambia. There is great diversity in denominations in Zambia, but the Anglican Church there has no money to train students. Their spoken English is fine, but it is their written English they need help with."



St John's Seminary in Kitwe

Keith taught Old Testament doctrine, Church and Society. He found he was also the 'go-to' person for IT and practical help. "We had all the tools and everybody wanted to borrow them," said Keith. "The number of hammers and children's bikes I welded!" Keith was also Parish Priest in Kwacha Parish, taking services there every Sunday.

Lyn said there had been some changes. "There is now more available to buy if you

are wealthy, but there is still huge poverty and dire need. Many people really struggle to make ends meet, but they are grateful for anything. It is a really tough life but they are very cheerful and resilient and have a strong sense of community and connection."

She said the city of Kitwe is very urban. "It is dirty, smelly, and rough. There are shanty towns and a lot of street kids and vulnerable orphans. You would be quite shocked to see how the people live."

A number of Church of Ireland parishes, through CMSI, have supported Keith and Lyn's work, including St George's, Belfast; Carnmoney; St John's, Malone; and St Patrick's, Jordanstown.

In some cases, parish representatives have had the opportunity to visit Kitwe. They include Archdeacon Stephen McBride, vicar of Antrim; Rev Aaron McAlister (now rector of Derriaghy); Bishop Trevor Williams; Maurice Elliott from the Church of Ireland Theological Institute; and former Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, who travelled to Zambia in February 2018. "We enjoyed having visitors and they got a lot out of it," said Lyn.

Their return home came in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. "Last March, people were very nervous and fearful, but in fact the numbers of

infections and deaths were very low," said Lyn. "There were some general guidelines issued, like wearing masks in supermarkets, but you cannot do social distancing in Africa. The people are very tactile and are always hugging and kissing. Some did wear masks for a while, but the novelty soon wore off. Things were very complacent when we left in December, but numbers are going up now."

Keith added: "Zambia is very much in the orbit of the South African economy, and a lot of produce is imported from Durban, so the South African variant of COVID-19 is now in Zambia. The health system there is very fragile, and there will be under-reporting. There will be difficulties testing and introducing vaccination. However, they do have a well-supported vaccination programme, particularly for children in urban areas."

Lyn said: "In Zambia, they are used to dealing with diseases like malaria, cholera and Aids, but obviously people are afraid of the unknown and the chances of dying from COVID-19 are higher there because they don't have our Health Service. But the risk of death from snake bites or malaria is also very scary for them."

Keith believes there is still a role for a missionary / mission partner in countries like Zambia. "Two things still need done in Africa as a whole," he said. "Outside of large centres such as Nairobi and the big African churches, there is a big need for training, and delivering training is an expensive exercise. They need people like us to do that. If leaders are trained outside a country, that country will lose them. I know Zambians as capable as me who could teach in the seminary, but they are now teaching in the United States because that is where they qualified and have settled."

He said mission partners are also needed to maintain on-the-ground relationships. "When Archbishop Richard came out we were able to facilitate a formal meeting between him and the Archbishop of Central Province. We can also keep the Western Churches aware of what is going on in Africa," Keith said.

Lyn agreed: "It also about being embedded in the culture. It takes you to live next door to Zambians and to work with them to see them benefit from that. It is a privilege; we are not just giving - we are also receiving. You don't get that from a short-term visit."

The couple say their timing of their departure was right for the seminary. "It needs to stand on its own two feet," Lyn said. "The seminary has benefited from boreholes and electricity supplies which people have given money towards. Irish people have been generous about giving and we have really appreciated it. But for us the time was right for change."

"We are still with CMSI for six months and had thought we may be assigned somewhere else, but with COVID-19 that hasn't been possible. We don't know what is next, we will leave it to God."

COMMUNICATION

Make no mistake, the message was clear: Dislike. In Buenos Aires, not being English, related to Maggie, or having fought in the Falkland's, I was somewhat surprised to feel spit hit my neck between hat and collar. Perhaps the smart panama made me look a touch colonial, however not being a fighting man I thought it best to ignore the assailant, although I had to admire his accuracy (could have been a sniper). "Lingua vincit omnia". Unfashionable it may be, but what a beautiful expressive onomatopoeic word "SPIT" is, with it's hissing "s" and the hard "p", "i" and "t" leaving the lips, the saliva seems unnecessary, unless, for example, like that Argentinian fellow.



As I walked away from the distressing incident described above, my mind wandered to days in the fifties, strolling up and down York Street with spit underfoot. Not enough to skate on, but the pavements well covered by the perpetrators (unknown outside polite society) caused, in most cases by chewing tobacco.

Dandering along the same street some fifty years later the good news is the tiles are pristine clean, but on the downside the men one passes now, if not on a mobile device, do not tilt the head and wink, as if to say "I'm O.K., you're O.K., all is well" as we did in the olden days. It is all just common sense communication. The females say "Hi " (derived from the German "Heil") instead of "Hello". Also, often heard is - "Have a good day", meaning, behave, go forth and do good works, instead of the succinct and less dictatorial "Good day".

One way or another life is communication, and we are very lucky now to have the luxury of handheld phones with their repeatedly memory jogging chat and the ability to lovingly scroll photographs over and over again, instead of occasionally studying the carefully got together albums of generations, Aunt Sally and all.

It comes to this, in this wonderful cosmopolitan society, there is an undesirable deviance creeping upon us. It would not be going too far to say leaving just two types of people, firstly the pre-occupied mobileista knowing everything, leaving us with the others, the communicating conversational lot, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, don't knows and others who will pass the time of day with you. It's a pity one cannot walk in both camps because mobiles are over addictive. Technology takes over and wins in the end, or does it?

The choice is ours.

Terence Mayne

A WARTIME CHILDHOOD - REMEMBERED

I had enjoyed a normal day for a seven-year old but it was time for bed. So I got in my pyjamas and had one leg in bed when I heard a high-pitched sound. I'd never heard it before at night, but I knew what it was, - a siren, an air-raid warning. So with my two brothers and mother we went downstairs and sat under the kitchen table, - that was the accepted wisdom at the time. I was not afraid because to me it was a novelty. We waited what seemed a long time and at last we heard the siren again but this time, instead of a steady note, the siren wailed up and down. So we knew it was the 'All Clear' signal and we were safe. So we went upstairs and into bed.

Three weeks later we were on a bus heading for Drumadoney, a townland between Dromara and Dromore. My parents had rented a cottage in the country, to be away from the Belfast bombing. Father, who was a policeman, stayed in town. Soon we were attending Skeogh School, not far from Dromore. It was a two-teacher school: Master Dickson presided over standards 4 -7. In another room a lady teacher took junior and senior Infants and standards 1-3.

There was no going home for lunch now ; it was much too far. So instead of carrying a gas mask to school, as we were used to, we carried a packed lunch with an enamel mug and an oxo cube. The school provided hot water, so our lunchtime drink was oxo.

Mr Skelly, the farmer had four daughters about the same age as we three brothers, so we went to school together. The two eldest went on bikes. The rest of us walked a mile to Master Dickson's home and he ferried us the two miles to school in his small Austin car. On our return journey he brought us to his home, and we walked back from there. As we approached his house on the return trip, there was a very steep hill, which taxed his small car, full of children, to the limit. So in a low gear he would weave from one side of the road to the other to take the strain off the engine.

The excitement for us city boys living in the country can well be imagined. Never before had we seen huge horses like Prince and Dobbin ploughing a field. Never before had we helped with the harvest in a corn field and then shared in tea from an enamel can with soda bread, butter and jam, sitting on a rug beside the stooks of corn. Never before had we trod flax into a dam with our bare feet to ensure it was well retted.

In August 1942, the bombs over Belfast had stopped. It was time to go home, with many memories of a time in the country we would never forget. So we left our two- teacher country school and entered the brand new state-of-the-art Botanic School, built in a public park. The park had a Palm House, a Tropical Ravine and talking parrots in a cage - all magic for an 8-year old. In the years that followed, we kept in touch with the Skelly family and spent several summer holidays with them. In time farm technology brought changes. The horses Dobbin and Prince gave way to a converted Commer lorry, that did duty as a tractor. Then came a grey Ferguson tractor and later a powerful David Brown.

After eighty years I am still in touch with two of the sisters I went to Skeogh School with. They have fond memories of the " evacuees" that descended on their farm in 1941. I have treasured memories of the Skelly family and of Drumadoney, my first taste of country life

Jeffrey Johnston

OUR LADY'S SECRET

by Paul McLaughlin



I strolled through the country park and the 'marmite' smell of cow parsley, a pungent mixture of parsley itself and aniseed, hung heavily in the air. 'Marmite' because you either love it or hate it. I love it and it brought back rich memories of spring days gone by.

Whether early or late, once Easter had quit the calendar for another year, the lads from our part of the street took to the roads. Saturday was travelling day and our only means of transport was a mixed bag of black school shoes, spongy soled sandals and gutties. We were foot soldiers in a rag-tag army that invaded the countryside each year in search of adventure. Later in the year when July had turned the corner into the month of harvest, free fruit would be our target.

Blackberry bushes were both friend and foe each May as we trudged through a canyon of them that went by the name of the Hannahstown Road. It was our ally in its abundance and its promise of the plump, ripened berries to come, but an enemy that boasted razor sharp thorns.

The beginning of May, or the festival of Beltane as Brother Hanley described the first of that month, brought the hope of sun and summer.

"Beltane comes from the old Celtic words for the fires of the sun god", he said, swishing the band of his soutane in time with his speech. "It's a celebration of the coming of summer and a time for new life and bonfires. But if I catch any of you amadans lighting fires, it'll be a time of misery and sore hands."

And with that he turned away, the dreaded leather strap dangling by his side, and pressed the start button of the Grundig reel-to-reel tape recorder that thundered out the rousing songs of the Clancy brothers and Tommy Makem. We primary seven pupils, forty of us in a log cabin of a wooden hut adjacent to the main school building, simply got on with our set work of English or maths with the 'Holy Ground' ringing in our ears.

Each Saturday after messages had been done for our mothers or the once monthly obligation of Confession, its penances distributed appropriately, had been fulfilled, seven or eight of us struck out on the long road to Hannahstown, a few miles along the mountain road that gazed over the city of Belfast.

In the three or four years that we walked that narrow country road, we never reached Hannahstown village or even got as far as Charlie Watters' public house that hosted illegal drinking on forbidden Sundays, but perhaps we knew even then that 'it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive'. And travel hopefully we did with no thought of tomorrow, no mention of school and no notion of the Eleven Plus exam that had dominated most of Brother Hanley's working days since September.

The weekend over, the walking done for another week, we returned to school that Monday morning to a Brother, thick black spectacles suspended on his

head, waving a white envelope.

"This" and he waved it harder and higher for all to see, "Holds my predictions for those fellas that will pass the Eleven Plus. I've written the names, sealed the flap and we'll store it where its secret is sure to be safe until the results come out."

With that, he walked to the back of the classroom, his heavy brogues beating out a tattoo on the wooden floorboards and slipped the envelope under the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes that stood on a shelf. We would all have to look directly at it at least twice a day, mornings and afternoons, when we sang out our Hail Marys in Irish. The edge of the envelope peeped out from day one.

Several weeks went past, our route marches into the countryside continued and eventually even the envelope was forgotten. This eleven-year-old, like all of his pals back then, had little concept of the divisive examination that might change their lives and most talk was of the summer holidays to come. The results came on a Saturday morning, thick and thin brown envelopes bringing joy to some and sorrow to most. The white envelope, which Brother Hanley had called Our Lady's secret, was opened the following Monday, immediately after prayers.

The smell of the cow parsley is stronger now and as sharp as my memories. The seven boys that Hanley had named had all been successful, but no mention was made of the 33 others. Such bad news was a secret best kept.

THE GREAT HUNGER

Health and wealth and love he too dreamed of in May
As he sat on the railway slope and watched the children of the place
Picking up a primrose here and a daisy there -
They were picking up life's truth singly.
But he dreamt of the Absolute envased bouquet -
All or nothing. And it was nothing. For God is not all
In one place, complete
Till Hope comes in and takes it on his shoulder -
O Christ, that is what you have done for us:
In a crumb of bread the whole mystery is.
He read the symbol too sharply and turned
From the five simple doors of sense
To the door whose combination lock has puzzled
Philosopher and priest and common dunce.
Men build their heavens as they build their circles
Of friends. God is in the bits and pieces of Everyday -
A kiss here and a laugh again, and sometimes tears,
A pearl necklace round the neck of poverty.
He sat on the railway slope and watched the evening,
Too beautifully perfect to use,
And his three wishes were three stones too sharp to sit on,
Too hard to carve. Three frozen idols of a speechless muse.

Patrick Kavanagh (1904-1967)

Submitted by Geoffrey May



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THE VISITATION, ACCORDING TO ST LUKE

by Billy Adair

May is the month of Mary, and on the 31st we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation, making three days in the calendar set apart to honour the chief of Saints, Mary, the Mother of God.

The story of Mary's visit to her relative Elizabeth comes from St Luke chapter 1 v 39-45. It is a lovely account of the meeting of two expectant mothers, one quite young, the other past the usual child-bearing age, both surprised and amazed that they were in that condition at all. How excited they must have been, and what craic they must have had, and of course the visit gave us the Magnificat, with all the sensitivity of St Luke's writing. None of the other Gospels mentions it, but then isn't St Luke's Gospel rather unique? Matthew, Mark and John were written for the Jews: Luke aimed at the whole world, a Universal Gospel.

St Luke himself was different from the other Gospel writers as he wasn't one of our Lord's disciples. Also he wasn't a Jew and is the only Gentile writer in the entire New Testament. His Acts of the Apostles is an exploration of the Early Church and of St Paul's missionary journeys.

Luke was probably a Greek, a well-educated man, which accounts for his Greek being the best in the New Testament. He was a doctor by profession, and perhaps that is what makes his Gospel so lovely, so human. Someone said, "a minister sees people at their best, a lawyer at their worst, a doctor as they are!"

As well as being a doctor and a writer Luke was a painter, and in a Spanish Cathedral is a portrait of the Virgin Mary, believed to be by Luke. He has been called "the singing doctor" for he gave us three great canticles. Benedictus, Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis; also the three lovely parables, the lost coin, the lost sheep and the lost son.

He obviously knew the Virgin Mary, for some of the things recorded in his Gospel could only have come from Mary herself. I once discussed this source with a theologian and writer Dr Allchin, who was lecturing in St George's, but he just stuck out his chin and looked sceptical. St Luke also knew St Paul, and for the last two years of Paul's life Luke was by his side, making him as easy and comfortable as he could. Luke was a really nice person, and a good doctor I'm sure.

The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a recent addition to the calendar, as it first appeared in the Alternative Prayer Book in 1984: consequently there were few hymns on the subject.

The Irish Hymnal Committee were anxious to include a suitable up-to-date hymn, and after much searching came up with No 470 "Let God's people join in worship."

This hymn was written by a group of monastic musicians, men and

women, Anglican and Roman Catholic, and was published in "Hymns for Prayer and Praise" in 1996. According to "Companion to Church Hymnal" the Visitation Hymn was based on Laurence Housman's translation of a 15th century Latin Hymn which begins:

"Now in holy celebration
Sing we of the mother blest."

This new hymn does not rhyme and may not be easy to sing, but here is the first verse:

Verse 1 "Let God's people join in worship
on the Virgin Mary's feast,
And entreat the gracious favour
of the child she carried then,
whom Elizabeth discerning
welcomed as the coming Christ."

The next three verses tell of Elizabeth's welcome and recognition that Mary was carrying the promised Messiah, and Mary's response in the Magnificat. You can read the intervening verses, 2,3 &4 at hymn number 123 in the English Hymnal

The hymn ends:

Verse 5 "Holy Father, Son and Spirit
Reigning in eternal power,
With your loving grace and favour
Keep us safe for evermore,
And our earthly course completed.
Bring us to eternal life."

Well, the hymn tells the simple story of the Virgin's Visitation in unrhyming poetry, but not so well as Luke's original prose from his Gospel, which has been called "the loveliest book in the world."

Endpiece by Jo Calder

A Personal Journey To St George's

As a member of the Server's Guild in St George's it is a role I regard very much an honour and a privilege. Even after 20 or more years donning my robes, it is not taken lightly and remains as big a commitment for me now as at the beginning.

When I first joined, the late Willy Fulton was Head Server, but it was Tony who inadvertently "recruited" me – he approached my husband and myself to ask if we would consider Jonny, our 14 year old son, becoming a Server; he had been confirmed the year before in St George's (he is now 36, and decided to join as a Server last year). We felt being a young teenager he may not fully understand the total commitment needed, so I told Tony I would be honoured to join. Over the years those I've Served with include Gerry Lynch and Ian Jamieson who both went on to become Priests.

However, I started my Christian journey as a Presbyterian. My mum and her family were Church of Ireland, parishioners of St Patrick's on the Newtownards Road in East Belfast. Mum didn't like the Church of Ireland (something I never understood and wish I had asked her why while she alive), so when she met and married my dad it was in the Presbyterian Church. Both of my younger brothers and myself were christened and brought up in that tradition; every Sunday morning we attended Mountpottinger Presbyterian Church, and in the afternoon back for Sunday School. Ladies and men wore "Sunday best" with hats *de rigueur* for ladies; children were ignored - it being the 50's & early 60's of course. It was a very formal Church, and I found it stifling. Aged 11 I decided I'd had enough and started to go to St Patrick's Church with mum's elder sister. At first my parents were a little peeved, but realised it was what I wanted - at least I was still going to Church!

I attended St Patrick's for years; got confirmed, was married there, and our son Jonny was baptised by Archdeacon Macourt. He was a wonderful clergyman, the Church welcoming to babies and young children – something I felt was lacking in my early years attending my previous Church. I still recall going to a christening in a Presbyterian Church 34 years ago, Jonny, aged 2, going with us. He never misbehaved in Church as a child (he had been going from 6 weeks old), but I always remember a lady in front of us "tut tutting" because he happened to move position in the pew. The irony was I glanced over at a stained glass window which said, "*suffer the little children to come unto me*". It was then I felt nothing much had changed in the years after leaving the Presbyterian tradition. The baby and parents were brought in briefly during the Service, the baby christened, and they left again. Our Church is so different – child, parents and godparents are very much part of the **whole** Service; so for me a baptism is much more meaningful. Also, in St George's the congregation fully participates in all Services, not just sitting in pews listening.

Sadly, Archdeacon Macourt eventually retired, and we hoped the new Rector

would continue in the way he had led our Church. Unfortunately, that was not to be. When we attended the new Rector's installation, we got the first glimpse of what was to come; one of his former parishioners told my husband and me "*you are welcome to him*". The first Sunday after that we realised what they meant – to say this man was "low Church" was putting it mildly. He refused to wear robes, and that Sunday when we went up for Communion, he administered the Bread as though he was dealing out a deck of cards. I didn't wait for the wine, I put Jonny back into his buggy, and my husband and I left, me in tears. I never went back. It was then I realised just how important it is for those who bear the responsibility of choosing a new Priest for their Church.

We joined St John's Orangefield, and to my delight I found the Rector was none other than Walter Lavery who had been our Curate with Archdeacon Macourt. I knew we were back in "safe hands"! During those years both Jonny and I joined the Choir – Jonny was only 6 and a half at the time. Our Choirmaster, Mr Scott, was a stickler for protocol; Jonny had to wait until he was 8 before being awarded his Surplice. Mr Scott arranged a visit for the boys of St John's to go to St George's during a Choir rehearsal - my son was very impressed, even then. That was our first experience with St George's. During a week's holiday, on a whim, we decided instead of going to St John's that Sunday, and possibly being expected to don Choir robes, we would go to St George's and see what it was like. I still thank God for our making that decision. The first person to welcome us was Fr William (I think Fr Brian was on holiday), and the next person to do so was Raymond Cairns. The Service was just amazing, and, as the saying goes, the rest is history. Jonny was 12 at the time, and eventually Fr Brian prepared him for his Confirmation at the Easter Eve Eucharist just after his 13th birthday.

For me St George's is a Church unlike any other; its ethos and its ethics, its views on life, on people, Christianity and humanity is what I feel Jesus was trying to make clear when he preached so very long ago. Everyone is welcomed. Our High Anglican Liturgy is beautiful, a total inspiration; our Choir second to none. Over time I have become friends with others of the congregation; I say "friends", as those whom I regard as such are more than just other members of St George's. I had come to my religious home.