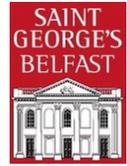


The Parish Church of Saint George



PARISH MAGAZINE

An open door in the heart of the City



Mary Magdalene



JULY 2021

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From the Rector's Desk



Dear Friends in Christ,

I was very touched to receive a lovely bottle of wine and beautiful flowers on Sunday 20th June after the Eucharist to mark the 30th anniversary of my ordination as a Deacon. Next year (DV) I will celebrate 30 years as a priest in the Church of God. It will soon be 27 years since I was instituted as Rector of St George's – tempus fugit! It's the traditional seasons of ordinations and many of my friends and colleagues celebrate notable anniversaries of ordination in June. Our dear friend Fr Tom Layden S.J. celebrated the 30th anniversary of his priesthood on the 22nd June. What a ministry and influence for good he has engaged across the community in Belfast and throughout Ireland.

As I reflect on their anniversaries and the ministries of many friends, I also recall some who were ordained with me and who now "rejoice upon another shore" – Alan Chalmers, Richard Kelly, Gary McCartney, Allen Delamore, and many others, some who died relatively young. Their legacy remains in the lives they touched and the good they did. I also remember the influence on me of the holy men and women such as Dick McDonald, Edgar Turner, Sister Anna and a host of others whose lives were dedicated to God and the service of his people in the Church and beyond. It's sobering to think of them all but also is an occasion of great thanksgiving and joy at the happy memories and wisdom imparted by them. Maybe we could all practice a bit more thanksgiving for all those good and holy people, lay and ordained, who've touched our lives.

The photograph of my ordination year recently appeared on Facebook and one of my contemporaries commented "Would you look at the cut of us!" We're certainly no better looking, some of us have definitely 'prospered' so that we've great difficulty now getting into our ordination cassocks. Hopefully we're all a bit wiser and a lot less sure of ourselves than we were then. Recently a photograph of some very young, perfectly groomed, clean cut and smiley ordinands, together with their biographies, appeared on Facebook. An old priest friend and wag commented "More wearying Gnosticism and teeth!" Hopefully as the teeth became less perfect the Gnosticism will subside and wisdom grow.

Have a lovely summer and God be with you all.

Yours in Christ

Brian Stewart

CONGRATULATIONS

Our Congratulations to David Jeffrey MBE



David is a parishioner of St George's and a highly decorated Irish League manager and former player, who has received an MBE for 'services to football and community relations in Northern Ireland' in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List.

David, who played for and managed Linfield, has lifted 31 honours during a managerial career spanning over two decades.

David, who has been manager of Ballymena United since 2016, also works as a senior social worker.

LUDMILLA GOES TO SCHOOL

by Geoffrey Johnston

We were on a cruise on the waterways of Russia in 1996. Our guide was Ludmilla, a professor at Moscow University. During one of her talks, she told us this story about her childhood in the early 1950s. Where she lived, children started school at seven. However, when she was a few weeks short of seven, her mother decided it was time she was at school. She felt her daughter was bright and mature for her years and no time should be wasted on starting her education.

So, her mother and aunt brought Ludmilla to the school to see the principal. He was very sympathetic and agreed that she was very mature and would have a bright future at the school. Still, the rule was the rule, he said, and Ludmilla would have to wait another year. Her mother was far from satisfied. The next day she said to her husband, "Put on your uniform Vladimir and you take Ludmilla to the school".

So, her husband did as she asked, put on his uniform, and went to see the principal. When he returned, he said to his wife "The principal agrees that Ludmilla may start school next week."

Her mother had got her way and she was delighted.

Forty years later, our guide Ludmilla made this comment: "The principal could say 'no' to two women; he could not say 'no' to a veteran of the Patriotic War."

(What we call WW2, Russians call the Patriotic War)

DANDELIONS

Taraxacum officinale. Medieval Latin, *dens leoins*. French, *dent-de-lion*. Middle English, DANDELION, the cheeriest of wildflowers with sharply toothed leaves.



Oh that Miss Appleby were here now, so that I could thank her, a progressive P7 teacher. It was she who took us for nature walks in the hot summer of 1947, teaching us in the glen how to tell a beech tree from a birch, and on shore why the stones are rounded and sea anemones have a mouth somewhat similar to our own, although many million years older. The same lady was not great on Dandelions, but her enthusiasm for nature stuck with me. So it was, in 1953, listening to a 1930 78rpm recording of Morgan and Mack, those two laid back laconic conversationalists, known as The Two Black Crows. Morgan remarks he had a farm and when asked what kind of a farm, he replied "A dandelion farm". Well, thus inspired, I rented a half acre field at once, and planted daffodils and Dandelions together. The former grew to look every bit as good as the ones Wordsworth binged on about. Well over in mid May I chopped off the greenery and up popped a luxurious carpet of Dandelions. For many years much pleasure it gave me before taken away for a housing development. Some years on now, with time on my hands, I aim to plant the same again with joy, unlike the conventional, all pervasive green lawn, which one equivocates for instance with the academic cream classroom.

If only our poet had written, "My heart leaps up when I behold a host of dancing Dandelions" and went on to tell more, of how they are entirely edible, make class wine from the flowers, coffee from the root, source of food for wildlife, improves road verges and meadows, can cure most human ailments, gout, skin conditions and rheumatism for a start. If only he had told us all this the Dandelion would have received more respect over generations.

My favourite flower, my favourite wine - Good Health.

Terence Mayne

THE CLOCK OF LIFE

by Paul McLaughlin



Some things change, and some things stay the same. Many of the things that have changed over the years are the things that I wish had stayed the same. Some have stayed the same that I would have preferred to have changed but, thankfully, good memories have changed the least in all that time.

The teaching practice was going well, according to the student teacher who stood in front of our primary four class of eight and nine year olds. 'You'll find this easy because you're a clever lot of boys', he said, 'For today we're going to learn a poem that I first heard when I was your age. It's all about a mammy watching her wee boy on his first day at school. Won't that be great?'

He was a friendly young man in a tweed jacket and dark trousers, whose hair fell over his forehead when he laughed, which he did frequently. A man with a voice blest with encouragement. A man already christened 'Tweedie' by the lads in our class. Our usual teacher was a stern middle-aged individual for whom smiles were features that he must have reserved for home and family. God help them.

A poem about school he'd said cheerfully. I would have preferred one about pirates or cowboys, even that one about the Lady with the name like an onion who was locked up in a tower. Almost anything else **but** school. Our school was dark and still Victorian in the 1950s with the shadow of the cane hanging over us all on a daily basis and the master's face glowering blackly like the Earl of Hell.

'Tweedie' produced a sheaf of white papers, with another smile, and distributed them singly down the rows of antiquated desks that had served our school for more than fifty years.

I remember taking my copy and the ink smudging on my fingers. A blue purplish colour that had a smell, a wee bit like methylated spirits, that was strange and exciting at the same time. I didn't know it then of course, but the school's Roneo machine, a sort of a cross between a stencil and a very basic photocopier had reproduced the 48 pages needed for our class in a matter of minutes. 48 eager pairs of hands accepted them greedily. Even with school as the subject. The shiny paper held a hand-written poem, presumably in Tweedie's own hand, that filled the A4 length of the page and the title 'Wee Hughie' was top and centred in much bigger script.

All heads went down in deep concentration as the new 'master' started to read, **'He's gone to school wee Hughie and him not four. Sure I saw the fright was in him when he left the door....But he**

took a hand of Dinny and he took a hand of Dan, And with Joe's old coat upon him, Och the poor wee man'; and finished with, 'I followed to the turning when they passed it by, and God help him he was crying and maybe so was I.'

I thought that was very sad, as did my friend Gerard, but some the lads, those who had already long forgotten their own first days, were playing up like genets and the student had to clap his hands loudly to restore order.

He produced at least one other 'Roneoed' poem during his fortnight at the head of our class, one about the contents of a boy's pockets as I recall, and enough laughter to last us until Christmas.

I kept that first folded sheet of paper for many years, along with some old well-creased school reports and a green appointment card for the NHS dental clinic, but somehow the copying process, then in its infancy, fell victim to time itself and the words disappeared from the page. The purple poetry faded firstly to lilac and then to nothing as if it had never existed on the page.

But the memory has remained and as I Google the full wording of the little poem for the first time in sixty years, I hear my mother's soft voice recite it as she did that day I brought it home. A few moments in life's clock of memory that will never change.





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BREATHE ON ME BREATH OF GOD

by Billy Adair

Some time ago I was chatting to a lassie of 10 years of age and. I asked if she had a favourite hymn. As she was full of life and fun I waited for "Stand up, stand up for Jesus", "Onward Christian Soldiers" or the like, but her answer, given without the slightest hesitation, took me by surprise, for her choice was "Breathe on me, breath of God".

This gem of prayer to the Holy Spirit was written by Edwin Hatch, D.D., who was born in Derby in 1835 and went to Pembroke College, Oxford where in 1857 he took an honours degree. He went off to Canada and for 8 years was Professor of Classics in Trinity College, Toronto and later Rector of the High School of Quebec. In 1867 he returned to England, was appointed Principal of St. Mary Hall, Oxford and in 1883 became Rector of Purleigh. He gained a certain fame as a Church historian and theologian and wrote a small number of hymns. After his death in 1889 a little book of his poems "Towards Fields of Light" was published and one of these poems was "Breathe on me, breath of God".

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou would'st do.

In the Scriptures the breath of God meant life - to quote two examples: Genesis 2: v 7 reads "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul". Secondly, in Ezekiel 37 we have the curious story of the valley of the dry bones, and verses 9 and 10 read "Then said He unto me "Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind "Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me and the breath came into them and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army".

These then are the thoughts of the writer when he prays "Breathe on me, Breath of God, Fill me with life anew"; but the next two lines are much more difficult to accept "That I may love what Thou dost love, And do what Thou would'st do". These might almost be called "the Uncomfortable Words", for to love what God loves embraces everyone and every thing in His creation. "God so loved **the world**", and that includes the boss who is so unfair, the teacher who always picks on you, the friend who has let you down so badly, the policeman, who booked you for speeding and our Roman Catholic brethren. We must go a step further and begin to pray for our enemies, which include the bomber, the murderer and the criminal, for Jesus taught His followers to do so and this is what "doing what He would do" surely means. It is little wonder we ask for a renewal of life to cope with that lot!

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will
To do and to endure".

Here is the source of all our troubles - the heart. Often in the scriptures the plea

has been for a new heart, a clean heart, a pure heart, a, heart of flesh for a heart of stone and such a change of heart can only truly come about by the Grace of God and by the Power of His Divine Spirit. With the new heart come new desires, a God-centred will to work in co-operation, to do His bidding, and to walk in His holy ways, for it is "he who shall endure to the end, shall be saved".

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine".

Like many great prayers this short hymn gathers momentum with each verse and this third verse is the most difficult to really mean as it demands the ultimate. It is so easy to sing, the words flow almost too smoothly, but if one were to **mean** what one sings, then life for that person would never be the same again. "Glows with Thy fire divine". Surely this is what is wrong with our religion: it is not so much luke-warm as decidedly cold: the sparkle has disappeared: the fire has become so low that it is in danger of going out entirely. The only remedy is the Divine spark, the Breath of God, which will set the Christian alight to glow afresh, radiating that cheering glow as if the sheen of heaven had touched the things of earth.

At this stage a word of warning; it is much more difficult to "go it alone", to glow on one's own - "you in your small corner and I in mine" type of thing. A Bishop and a Professor were chatting in front of a huge fire after dinner one evening and soon they got around to religion. The professor had no use whatever for "organised religion". Church-going to him was a waste of time. He said it was quite unnecessary as he could worship equally well on his own, in the open air or anywhere else. The Bishop did not reply but with the tongs took one large lump of fiercely burning coal from, the fire and placed it in the hearth. The conversation continued, ranging over many subjects. At the end of the evening the Bishop went to the hearth and with his hand picked up the lump of coal, now dead and cold and said to the professor "This is what happens when you try to be a Christian alone". The professor took the point and well might we, for our ever diminishing congregations at public worship is one of the causes of our weakening faith and ineffective witness in the world of today.

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity".

For many, heaven is a bewildering name, or place, or state. Countless books, "thesis, poems and hymns have been written about it, some of them merely adding to the confusion. Years ago it was explained to me in a single sentence by a dear old lady, claiming little education, but a deep faith and long life of devoted Christian service behind her. "Son", said she, "Don't fret yourself about heaven; where Jesus is that's heaven".

So in this last verse we soar up to God's heaven and by the Grace of the Holy Spirit claim His great promise, to live in His Presence for all Eternity.

THANK YOU TINYLIFE, YOU ARE MY SAFE HAVEN

BY EDEL MCINERNEY

*Following the service on June 27th there was a retiring collection in aid of the charity **TinyLife**.*

On June 20th, Edel McInerney, a choir parent and mother of Fionn, abseiled down the Europa Hotel, in aid of this charity. The 'letter' below explains Edel's motivation for undertaking this fundraising enterprise; it also explains why we, at St George's, prayed for Fionn for several months, following his birth, and why we have endorsed this appeal for support.

Dear TinyLife

My name is Fionn and I was born at 29 weeks and 5 days on the 25th of October 2017 by emergency caesarean in the RVMH Belfast. My mummy had pre-eclampsia. I was diagnosed prenatally with a congenital heart defect - Tricuspid Artesia and when I was born they discovered I have a sternal cleft. I only weighed 1.036kg. Time was not on my side. I was too small for surgery and my heart started to fail. As I lay in my incubator surrounded by tubes, leads, machines and beeps doing my best to stay alive. I had met my mummy and daddy but not my brothers. I had to meet them!! Thank you TinyLife for giving my mummy a hospital grade double breast pump, she had to pump every three hours so I could get the nourishment from her milk. I needed to grow.

In the early days I was oblivious to all the fuss I was causing but you, TinyLife were there for my family. You gave simple practical advice, you understood what my mummy and daddy were going through. A friendly face in the family room when they couldn't be by my side. You understood. You help them so they could help me. My first month was fraught, we all took it day by day. On the 25th November 2017, things got really bad my heart and lungs were giving up. I got christened and confirmed on that day. I got to meet my brothers – Eoghan and Cormac. They got to hold my hand. They drew the curtains around my incubator in NICU. Everyone was crying but my brothers weren't, - they told me they could not wait for me to get out of there and play with them. I had to keep going. You, TinyLife, help them too – in a time where their lives were utter chaos a friendly hello on a long, grey, daunting corridor where they sat reading waiting for mummy or daddy to come out from my side.

You gave me my first Teddy and Octopus on World Prematurity day 16th November 2018 and a lovely purple crochet blanket for over my incubator. This made my mummy cry ... with happiness it was my first present.

Everyone was too scared to get me anything, just in case..... But you, TinyLife, knew, you understood. We preemies are fighters!!!

I had lots more battles to face before I left NICU. On the 10th December 2017, I was transfer to NICU, The Coombe in Dublin. My first of many ambulance trips in the "transporter shuttle". My brothers got to wave me off.

My heart was failing and I needed surgery but I was still too small and fragile. My surgery was scheduled in Crumlin for after Christmas but I got NEC (necrotising enterocolitis) on Christmas eve. My life was on the line again. On the 15th of January I got my first catheterisation to investigate the pressure in the different chambers in my heart. I got transferred back up to HDU in Belfast on the 20th January 2018. Again your friendly presence, TinyLife, was there, you knew all about my trip to Dublin. You were there for my family giving them a hidden strength so they could be there for me. I ended up back in Dublin for an emergency surgery to put a stent in to my PDA on Saturday 10th February but came back to Belfast on the 13th and got to go home for a while on the 21st February. I had spent 117 days in NICU/HDU and PICU. Now I got to go home and see my brothers every day.

My heart was still failing and I needed another surgery, but I need to be 2.5kg minimum to get on the heart bypass machine. I needed to grow; I was being tube fed every three hours. You provided a safe space to meet others who had been on the same Neonatal journey. I met boys and girls who were my incubator neighbours. Thanks to you TinyLife, my mummy and I did baby massage classes. I wasn't very much into it but mummy loved the chat, the cup of tea and cakes at the end. I never realised how scared my parents were to bring me out but here they felt they could have fun with me in a safe, non-judgemental way. The sign on my pram warning people to keep their germs away from me and the hand sanitisers were understood here!!!! I grew stronger and stronger and got my surgery on the 24th of May 2018. After another 17 days in PICU in Crumlin in Dublin and in the Clarke Clinic in Belfast, I got to go home again. Thank you to all the amazing medical staff in Belfast and Dublin.

I have taken part in research studies you, TinyLife fund in association with Queens University, without this type of research babies like me would not get the best start in life. I love going to your Headquarters, TinyLife, for fun parties like at Halloween and Christmas. I love the sensory playroom. I get to see my friends again and so does my mummy. My heart can't be "fixed", I have a pig skin to keep my chest together and I need more surgery, but I live to tell another tale!

Thank you TinyLife, you provided a lifeline when my family needed it most. Thank you TinyLife, you give my family emotional and practical support when we need it.

Thank you TinyLife, you are my Safe Haven.

Love Fionn