

# **For Him, For You 2015: Ballyholme Parish Mission Plan** **Remembering our Mission**

***Prepared for the visit of Bishop Harold Miller on  
Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014***

## **Where we are now: March 2014**

In 2009 we began a process of parish consultation on the theme 'On the Way, Have your Say'. 160 people attended a parish away day and two follow-up discussion sessions and those who could not attend were invited to make some written submissions.

We considered the following questions:

- How do we draw more of our families into parish life?
- How do we draw more people into our worship?
- How do we preserve what we love about our Church building while making it fully fit for purpose in the 21st century?
- How do we reach out to our extended Christian family more effectively?
- How can we take our ministry to seniors and young people to the next level?

What emerged of significance from these conversations has been or is still being actively pursued. But in terms of the infrastructure and resources (Church and Parish Centre) which have served Ballyholme so well since 1940, a clear feeling emerged that as we currently are, missionally speaking, we have come about as far as we can come. There was also an acknowledgment that when the Parish Centre was opened in 2005 no one had foreseen the community footfall and interest our new premises would generate.

A Church Restoration Group was formed and having submitted its preliminary findings to the Vestry an architect was commissioned to produce (1) a grounds survey and (2) a feasibility study. In September 2013 the Vestry unanimously agreed to appoint an architect and carry the project forward within a budget of £1.25 million (10% will go to a missions project).

## **Church Restoration Project: January 2016**

With a planned on-site start date of January 2016, preparations are well advanced to restore our much loved Church building, to improve our existing Parish Centre amenities, and to connect the Church to the Parish Centre with a new functional space.

With regard specifically to the Church, whilst preserving its beauty and atmosphere, our aim is twofold:

- (1) to make St Columbanus more accessible and more commodious for more of our parishioners and more of the local community
- (2) to make St Columbanus more flexible for a greater variety of style and size of service

To quote the Rector's Columbanus Day sermon (24 November 2013)  
"slope or no slope we can improve access to this building, we can make it more accessible for more people and more flexible for more services. We can make it

both warmer and cheaper to heat. We can make it brighter and improve sightlines so more people can see. We can upgrade our audio system so more people can hear, and we can find a more subtle and discreet alternative to that palaver of a screen. We can do better for those with wheelchairs and rollators and pushchairs. We can make more provision for our families and especially for our youngest children. We can do something about the lack of loos. And we can provide a second exit to catch-up at last with the health and safety requirements of living in the modern world.”

## **2015: Diocesan Year of Mission & European Columbanus 1400 Celebrations**

The twelve months leading up to January 2016 is the year of celebrations marking the fourteen hundredth anniversary of the death of St Columbanus. As part of the Bangor Columbanus 1400 group, the parish will participate in a number of anniversary events through the course of 2015. Bangor is expecting a steady stream of international guests through that year many of whom will wish to visit St Columbanus Ballyholme as part of their pilgrimage experience.

2015 thus seems like the perfect opportunity for us to launch our restoration scheme and to encourage our parishioners to support the project both spiritually and financially. The hope would be that at some point that year our families will formally commit themselves to praying for and giving to the project.

The need therefore, looking forwards, is

- (1) to concentrate our spiritual purpose and to garner commitment prior to the period of closure and restoration
- (2) to set the missional sights of the parish on a new phase of ministry with restored and enhanced facilities which give us a fresh opportunity to welcome in the community around us

## **Prior to closing the Church for restoration in January 2016**

### **October 2015 For Him, For You Mission Event**

Ending with a day of thanksgiving on Harvest Sunday (18 October 2015) we propose to run a week long programme of group-based social events to cover all of our parish demographics: eg Mothers and Daughters, Fathers and Sons, Children, Young People, Young Retireds and Seniors.

The Rector will present a spiritual challenge at each event and he will seek agreement by all those present to meet again for another week long programme of events when the restoration project has been completed – but to make every effort to bring someone with no church connection along with them.

An invitation will be issued to take a place on an Alpha Course or to join a home group.

## **On re-opening the Church for Christmas 2016**

### **December 2016**

We will endeavour to complete at least the Church works by December 2016 and arrange a Christmas Tree display or some other festival of welcome and invite the community to see and experience the newly restored St Columbanus.

### **2017: Mission Event – possibly around St`Patrickstide**

An array of social events will be aimed at the same array of parish groups as the 2015 programme – plus their special guests. For our parishioners the purpose will be to come, see and claim the newly restored Church and Parish Centre for themselves. For our invited guests the purpose will be to see what we have to offer and what is already going on in Ballyholme parish.

At the end of each event there will be a message from a visiting speaker followed by a dedication of the restored facilities and the people will be led in an act of personal spiritual commitment.

Another invitation will be issued to take a place on an Alpha Course or to join a home group (in January 2017).

This would seem like an ideal point for us to begin a new process of ‘outwards’ reflection. Having restored our premises and reached out with a new spiritual energy to those beyond our church gates, we will want to consider what new possibilities there are for our St Columbanus Christian family to serve and engage spiritually with our local Ballyholme community.

### **Bishop Harold’s Three Priority Areas**

Children, Community and Church will be considered over the next four pages, suffice to note at this stage

- St Columbanus has a long history of close inter-church co-operation with the other three churches in the Ballyholme area: Ballyholme Presbyterian, Ballyholme Methodist and the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer. This extends to shared worship at Holy Week, through the summer in the evenings and at Christmas.
- the parish regularly hosts an array of social events and organisations which draw on members of our own congregation and significant numbers of other people with connections with other churches or none (eg quizzes, dances, shows, keep-fit, walking, bowls, table-tennis, sewing and golf societies).
- St Columbanus has strong links with all the local schools. The clergy and our youth worker and children’s worker regularly visit Ballyholme Primary, Towerview Primary and Kilmaine Primary for assemblies. Our Youth Worker is also a frequent guest at Bangor Grammar, Glenlola Collegiate School and Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College. The clergy are also warmly welcomed at key points in the year to St Columbanus College.

## **Bishop Harold's Priority Area 1: Children (age 3-11)**

In September 2013, Laura Jeffrey was appointed as part time children's worker to develop our ministry to the 0 to 12s.

**Statistics** - average attendance of children over the last five years.

In 2008 Average Sunday Attendance was 396 and Young People Child & Creche 35, In 2009 it was 373 and 50, in 2010 280 and 79, in 2011 327 and 89 and in 2012, 358 and 105.

Numbers have swelled dramatically. We believe this is due to three key factors:

**1. Restructure of Children's Church** – Our Children's Church system was reorganised in 2009, and since then our numbers have grown exponentially. This system has several clear strengths:

a. Short terms of leadership (1 year)– parents more willing to sign up which allows leaders to commit their all to the task without the burnout that long-term children's church leaders often experience. It also brings fresh ideas each year.

b. Rotations of helpers – this allows room for the majority of parents to experience children's ministry, and fosters a sense of wider family, as children get to know one another's parents.

**2. Relocation of Crèche** – our crèche was moved in 2009 into the Columbanus room, which allows more space per child and is overall a room far better suited to the children and their families.

**3. Raising of Expectations on Baptismal Parents** – Over the last six years, it has been made clear to parents baptising their children that it is expected that they would bring their children to church, and register them at Children's Church when they reach three years of age. Parents are also expected to help at Children's Church on a rota basis, usually twice a year.

### **Current Programme**

**Parent & Toddler Group** – This group meets at 10.30 every Thursday morning during the school term and continues to grow, with currently around 30 children and their carers attending each week.

**Easter and Summer Jumpin'** – our annual summer and Easter programme for Primary School children. It is well loved by both children and leaders, and there is always a waiting list for places.

**Family Fun Day & Praise Parties**- Our next Family Fun Day takes place on 5<sup>th</sup> April, and our hope is to engage families from the local community as well as our own church families. We also hold Christmas and Good Friday praise workshops.

### **New Possibilities**

**Children's Choir** (name to be decided by the children) – will take place on Wednesday afternoons and will be a place for children from Primary 2 to Primary 7 to engage with each other and with God in worship. This will provide an opportunity for them to learn about and experience worship, and to take part in leading worship in our monthly family services.

**Increased Contact with Organisations** - we have been making more contact with our uniformed organisations (Guide & Scout), having taken sessions and run Christmas parties and it is our intention that these links will continue to be strengthened. It has also been agreed with the resident play group "Tiddly Winks" that we will take part in playgroup sessions at least once a term in order to establish contact with the children.

**Who Let The Dads Out?** – Our Toddlers group is exceptionally popular, but we are aware that these sessions reach relatively few fathers. In the context of family support strategies, there is a growing demand for male-orientated parenting groups and it is our hope that we can begin to lead this through running a "Who Let The Dads Out?" group.

## **Bishop Harold's Priority Area 1: Community Young People (Youth 12+)**

In September 2012 Jade Irwin was appointed as the sixth full time youth worker to build on the foundations of her predecessors and address the specific challenge of integrating our young people into the worshipping Christian life of the parish.

### **Current Programme**

#### **Emerge: Sunday mornings:**

15 young people (12 young people and 3 helpers and 2 18+ leaders).

Emerge is for Year 8 – Year 14; the adolescent version of Children's Church. Typically when young people reach Year 12+ they will be given 'Young Leader' roles.

#### **Youth Fellowship (YF): Sunday evenings**

25 young people on a regular Sunday (40 when students are home from university),  
3 key 18+ leaders and 5 over 18 helpers.

YF is for young people in Year 11+. The YF young people are encouraged to engage with the wider life of the church, particularly through attending services and making buns/presents for the older members of the church.

#### **JYF Drop-In: Tuesday afternoons**

15 young people and 3 over 18 leaders.

Drop-in is for young people in Years 8 – 10 after school and serves as a window through which young people and their families engage with other aspects of parish life.

#### **Leadership Training: Alternated evenings and afternoons**

A group of young leaders aged 16 – 22 recently took part in a leadership-training course, completing their OCN level 2 in youth work. One young man is now doing his level 3, and a number of others also hope to pursue their level 3 after major exams.

#### **Young People's Home Group: Monday evenings**

The youth home group (10 members) meets twice a month, with a mixture of social events and study sessions.

#### **Other:**

**X-Cess:** 80 young people during the day and 100-150 in the evenings, with at least 25 over 18 leaders. This event runs for a week of the summer, for young people in Years 8 – 14.

**Study Leave Support:** At times when young people have important exams, we open the halls to provide a relaxed environment for them to work in.

**Mentoring:** For young people who express a particular need for support at a given time.

**Streetreach:** 20 young people engaged from Ballyholme along with young people from other churches, and 5 18+ leaders from Ballyholme.

**30 young leaders:** aged 16 – 25 engaged across our programme.

**Kilbroney & Summer Madness:** We bring groups on camps for young people.

### **New possibilities**

**Youth Suite:** The church restoration project hopes to include a drop-in/hang out, big enough to have everyone comfortably fit, as well as space for a kitchen bar, pool table and table tennis table. There will also be offices for the youth and children's workers, a small group space for small group work and team meetings, and the use of a shared main hall.

**Integration:** The heart and vision of the Rector and my predecessor was for the integration of the whole church family. I have very much caught this vision, and am working to engage young people with their wider church family, with church services and with other parish activities.

**Co-op Dream:** In the medium to long term vision, I would love to find a way to make use of the co-op that has been sitting beside the church for 7 years. St Columbanus did try to buy it in 2009, but we were outbid for the property and the passion has been redirected towards the church restoration scheme.

## **Bishop Harold's Priority Area 2: Community Seniors**

In September 2004, Karen Baker was appointed as our part time Pastoral Assistant to the Elderly.

Here in St. Columbanus we value the elderly. By providing a range of programmes for parishioners and the wider community we encourage people to come out of their homes and interact with each other, avoiding the dangers of isolation and loneliness. Volunteer drivers are on call to provide lifts.

### **Current Programme:**

**Monday morning coffee and scones** – average attendance 40+

The buzz of chat and laughter from the Kajiado Room is wonderful as regular groups meet each week. Unlike regular cafés we watch out for new faces and make sure no one feels left out.

**Cinema Club** - about 20 people regularly

Cinema Club is at 2.00pm every other Tuesday. Films vary from golden oldies to recent blockbusters. Over a cup of tea and cake, we have a chance to discuss the likes and dislikes of the film.

**Weekly Friday Lunch** - 50+ diners each week

We have a dedicated team of volunteers including cooks, washers and drivers. Over the years we have managed to grow our Church family by getting to know and care for those who attend. At our Christmas lunch our numbers swell to 80+.

**Monthly Wednesday Club** – approx 40 people in the 75+ age group

Numbers over recent years have fallen slightly. Some people are reluctant to come along as they consider it to be a club for “old people” even though they may be 80+ themselves!

**Quarterly Communion Lunch** - attended by 35-40 mainly retired folk

They enjoy the informal setting of the Parish Centre and the ease of access to the building, as many can't physically make it into the church building.

### **Visitations**

Each week Simon, Alistair and Karen visit the housebound and those in nursing or residential care. We also have a team of 20 pastoral visitors who befriend and visit on a 4 to 6 weekly basis.

**Glenada Holiday** – 20-25 ladies

A 3 day break to Newcastle. Many are widows who cannot face the prospect of holidaying alone. Our clergy come to celebrate Communion and join us for lunch.

### **Occasional Catering (funerals etc.)**

The bonds of affection within the Church family have been significantly strengthened through this ministry.

### **New Possibilities:**

**Men:** Although thin on the ground to begin with, few men join in on our activities. We are now looking at a group for senior men and are toying with ideas (eg indoor bowls and woodworking).

**Freezer Ministry:** When our new kitchen is up and running we will be able to highlight specific needs within the Church family and community, perhaps during periods of illness, bereavement or unemployment.

## **Bishop Harold's Priority Area 3: Church**

Part of the preparation for our Year of Mission involves restoring the Church and connecting it to the existing Parish Centre.

Currently our Parish Centre is used, every weekday morning and evening, by both church and community based organisations. We would like our premises more accessible to even more people in the community. So we are currently working on plans that will hopefully provide a suite of buildings which will be missional at heart. We want our buildings to...

Engage more with the community

Enhance our sacred space

And be enjoyed by children of all ages (a second home!)

### **Three "W"s - Welcome, Worship and "Weans"**

#### **Welcome**

Over Christmas Eve/Day 2013 we had 870 people in Church. On an average Sunday we would have 358 but we know we have the capacity to welcome more. However, there are basic shortcomings with our existing set up, such as access to toilet facilities, and restricted access and fire escape provision.

At present anyone wishing to share in a cup of tea or coffee after worship has to exit the church and make their way up the hill to the Parish Centre. To make visitors feel more welcome, and our buildings more accessible, we are planning to construct a new Break-out / Meeting space between the Church and the Parish Centre. This space will also provide a new entrance foyer for people coming into church from the Groomsport Road.

As well as upgrading our catering facilities by enlarging the existing kitchen, we will provide a mini-kitchen in the break-out space. We also plan to install additional restroom facilities. The linking of the Church and Parish Centres will make our buildings more integrated, user friendly and universally accessible.

A Parish and Community Information Point will be located in the foyer for visitors. And also, for a wider community of visitors, mostly pilgrims from Europe, we propose to install a St Columbanus Education Display.

#### **Worship**

Our worship space will be reordered to provide more flexibility to accommodate both large and small services. At present a flight of steps to the chancel limits access for disabled people to receive Holy Communion. Some sightlines are obscured, due to a row of existing columns, in the north aisle. It is our intention to alter the dais to make it accessible to all, and bring forward the Holy Table so that more worshippers can see the celebrant.

The existing Choir stalls and organ will be relocated in the reordering. It is hoped to move the existing organ to the other side of the nave. The flexible seating and an enlarged dais will provide space for a more flexible and a creative worship area.

#### **"Weans"**

At present a crèche is run in the Parish Centre during services, but there is no permanent facility for Children/Nursing Mothers. We have set it as a priority that a dedicated children's space, well soundproofed and with visual access to the worship space, will be provided. The provision of a Children's and Youth Suite, will enhance the experience of church for both children and young people.

#### **Conclusion**

By providing the link between the church and the Parish Centre we believe we will have buildings which will be more welcoming, and attract more people to join us on a Sunday for worship making it a more effective centre for mission and praise.