

January 2019

NORTH CONNOR PASTORAL COMMUNITY



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NEWS BULLETIN

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Fr Chris Nellis passing on the 1st of December has left a void felt throughout the pastoral community. He was PP in Armoys since 2003, originally from Belfast he studied at St Kieran's College Kilkenny and joined the Portglenone monks at 18-years-old. His first appointment was to Rathlin Island, then moved to County Down to Kircubbin from 1983 to 1986. He was also a curate in Ardkeen (Waterford), before four years at St Joseph's Antrim, then back to North Antrim in Loughgiel parish, where he served in Magherahoney for five years. He had spells in the parishes of Downpatrick, Whitehouse, St Mary's Star of the Sea and Sacred Heart in Belfast, before his first appointed as PP to Armoys which he was very happy about and saw it as a coming 'home'.

A time of change.

When a parish loses its priest, it grieves. The familiar presence at the parish Mass is gone; the one whom many become used to visiting the sick is no longer there. And much, much more. Such is the grief in Armoys parish since the death in December of their parish priest Fr Chris Nellis, who died of cancer after a short spell in Causeway Hospital on 1st December. Parish life, like any life, will go on and thank God for all the active parishioners who look after so much in Armoys and in every parish. Fr Chris is the second priest in this Pastoral Community to die of cancer in 2018, the other being the former parish priest of St Malachy's, Fr Greg Cormican. Both men were in their early 60s when they completed their baptism.

In accordance with Canon Law (538.3) parish priests who have reached their 75th birthday must offer their resignation to the bishop. After retirement, a priest may opt to assist in a parish or be available to help out when needed. Fr Bobby Butler retired last August as PP of Loughguile and now lives in Ballycastle. He has kindly agreed to look after the pastoral needs of Armoys, not only saying the Sunday Masses but weekday ones as well. We have three other generous retired priests in our Pastoral Community who readily help when a priest falls ill or needs a holiday. Bishop Noel was able to find a replacement when Fr Greg Cormican fell ill (Fr Brendan Mulhall followed by Fr Diarmuid Sheehan).

It takes mental and physical strength to visit the sick, prepare and preach homilies, to preside at Mass, at weddings and funerals. Everyone over the age of 75 knows the difference the years make. The spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak – to use Mt 26:41. Retired priests can only do what they are able to do.

What can we do in our Pastoral Community? As a community of faithful people how do we bear each other's burdens? Is it not unfair and unjust to expect retired priests to take care of the pastoral and sacramental needs of a parish week-in and week-out until a replacement is found? These days, with the shortage of priestly vocations, a replacement may take many months to find – if ever.

First: pray for vocations. Our daily parish rosary in Portstewart includes a prayer for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Talk to and pray with your young people at home around this intention. Secondly; If you come up with ideas, talk to your PP or your parish lay representative on the Pastoral Community Forum or someone on your Pastoral Council if you have one. Thirdly: Pope Francis has already heard the ideas of ordaining married men and women, so please remember, we all read the religious papers.

Together we constitute the Body of Christ and together we will find a workable solution to this. Your reading this with understanding and sympathy will help inform any conversation you might have about this. A Pastoral Community in Belfast who faced the same problem solved it by reducing the number of Sunday Masses in each parish so that priests are able to cover for absences and holidays without turning to retired men too often. Is this something we should consider in North Connor? *Fr. Austin McGirr.*



THE DIOCESE OF DOWN AND CONNOR

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Creating Pastoral Communities

Following the publication of the Creating Pastoral Communities Consultation in Spring 2015 the Diocese created 13 new Pastoral Communities. Pastoral Communities are groups of parishes that seek to ensure everyone within the Diocese has support for their Christian journey through the collaboration that can take place among neighbouring parishes. On the First Sunday of Advent, 2017, the beginning of the Church's New Year, the Diocese commissioned the 13 newly created Pastoral Community Forums. These forums are made up of the priests and representatives from each parish.

NORTH CONNOR PASTORAL COMMUNITY FORUM		
PARISH	NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS
Armoyn		stolcansarmoy@hotmail.co.uk
	Ann Marie McDonnell	anniemo40@hotmail.com
Ballycastle and Ballintoy	Fr Brian Daly	ballycastle@downandconnor.org
	Marie McHenry	weehouseinfo@gmail.com
	Irene Green	mig3748@gmail.com
Ballymoney	Fr Francis O'Brien (Dep VF)	office@ballymoneyparish.com
	Susan Hargan	susan_hargan@hotmail.com
Coleraine	Fr Diarmuid Sheehan	dfmsheehan@yahoo.co.uk
	Anne Armstrong	pennearm@aol.com
Culfeightrin	Fr Con Boyle	c.boyle@downandconnor.org
Dunloy and Cloughmills	Fr Liam Blayney	dunloy@downandconnor.org
	Kieran Casey	kieran@thephotomaker.co.uk
Loughguile	Fr Patrick Mulholland	p.mulholland@downandconnor.org
	Mary McKinley	marygpmckinley@gmail.com
Portrush	Fr Seamus O'Reilly	seamusoreilly@outlook.com
	Eamon Brolly	cebrolly@aol.com
Portstewart	Fr Austin McGirr VF	portstewart@downandconnor.org
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	John O'Boyle	john.oboyle83@gmail.com
Ulster University	Fr Raymond McCullagh	r.mccullagh@ulster.ac.uk
	Frank Reynolds	frank55reynolds@btinternet.com

The remit of a Pastoral Community Forum is to agree a programme that will support and encourage the parishes of the Pastoral Community to work together on issues where collaboration is necessary and fruitful. Pastoral Community Forums do not supersede the work of Parish Pastoral Councils. On the contrary, they support

and co-ordinate the work of the parishes. In this way, they are a Forum for hearing what is going on throughout the Community and a place to answer the important question, 'what are we better doing together than separately?' "Our meetings so far have focused on getting to know each other, our individual personalities, interests, talents and abilities; becoming comfortable and open with one another; and of course, praying together. Through a process of discernment, we are beginning to explore our role and purpose, how we can support and build on the work of the Pastoral Councils, and what new opportunities we can bring to spread the gospel message in our area.

Deacon Terence in our Pastoral Community

On the 14th of October Deacon Terence Butcher from Portstewart parish was ordained into the



Permanent Diaconate. Bishop Noel has requested that Deacon Terence visit each parish within the community and to preach on the Gospel at

each weekend mass and to promote the Permanent Diaconate. He has also provided him with a portfolio which concentrates on charitable service. In the theology of the Diaconate the deacon is the icon of Jesus Christ the servant. A large part of Terence's background ministry comes from his experiences in the SVdP and poverty in the community. Especially poverty which is not only financial! Throughout Portstewart there seems a higher than normal incidence of people who are lonely. Some housebound due to sickness and various disabilities including mental health, mobility and age-related conditions. Then there is a poverty of local amenities such as an advice centre, a Credit union or a drop-in centre etc, that is accessible locally. Terence hopes to co-ordinate and give leadership within parish and outside to bring about initiatives to help alleviate suffering. Deacon Terence is also required to Baptise, officiate at Funerals and Weddings, attend to the sick and catechise.

NORTH CONNOR PASTORAL COMMUNITY FORUM (pcf) summary of minutes 28th November 2018 Knights of Columbanus.

Bishop Treanor has given the Knights of Columbanus permission to visit the PCFs in the diocese and outline the following vision for the organisation. Over the next three years they hope to have a Council of Knights in each of the 13 PCs. At present there are nine councils in the diocese.

Each council would support the work of the PCF with liaison between the Grand Knight (chairman) of the knight's council and the chair of the PCF. Two Knights of the order addressed the Forum and spoke of common misconceptions of the work and nature of the knights. During questions, the issue was raised of there being parishioners of Coleraine, Portstewart, and Dunloy who were strongly committed members of the Knights of the council based in Coleraine. Charlie agreed that this called for sensitivity during recruitment.

Forum Finances were discussed. Each parish agreed to contribute £100 to the Forum account.

Election of officers. Given the poor attendance we agreed to defer this decision until the next meeting in January. However, given the importance of communicating the work of the Forum we agreed to appoint a Communications Officer, Rev Terence Butcher.

Provision of Sunday Masses. Each member had been sent a copy of the current schedule. The absence through sickness of Armoys PP Fr Chris Nellis has brought into sharp focus the urgent need for us to address the number of Sunday Masses in our parishes. We cannot continue to rely on the good will of the retired priests in the Community. Any reduction in Sunday Masses will always be a contentious issue but we will endeavour to communicate to all parishioners (through the work of the newly appointed Officer) the fact of the reducing number of clergy available for Sunday Mass and the resulting pressure on us to make hard decisions. Pastoral Councils also will have to discuss this issue. If we each reduce by one Mass, it will free up a priest to help out in a neighbouring parish. Working out the rota will take time and care. We are not talking about closing churches. The item will remain on our agenda for some time.

Faith Development for Advent and Lent.

Ballymoney: members were given a copy of a comprehensive programme from January until November which was planned with Kieran Hill. Dunloy: planned an Alpha programme for February. GIFT continues to grow, now in its fourth year. University: showed the Oscar Romero movie. Highly recommended. Coleraine: Adoration for the start of Advent. Portstewart: commenced a four-week programme for Advent, after Mass on Fridays. All parishes in the PC are welcome to attend any of these events and advertise them in their parish bulletins.

Event for Parish Pastoral Councils. Fr John Forsythe (PP Randalstown) has written a presentation on Pope Francis' latest document "Gaudete et Laetare" (Rejoice and be Glad) which could be offered to members of PPCs in our Community. If we were present, it would give us and them a chance to recognise one another and build community. Members agreed to invite their parish council members. Fr Austin to agree a date with Fr John.

Next meeting: 30th January 7.30pm in the Parish Minor Hall, Ballymoney

Planning together for a sustainable future.

As stated in the Living Church Christmas bulletin, "for the first time ever in Down and Connor, we can say that it is far more likely to visit a Parish in the Diocese, that has a Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) than one that does not". This is significant progress and necessary preparation for the sustainability of parish life, as we travel into the future.

In our own Pastoral Community of North Connor, (below) there are only three parishes which



are without a PPC and conversation and preparation are ongoing for the formation of the same.

We have many challenges ahead. Laity increasingly are taking on more responsibility for the everyday functions of parish life and this will inevitably increase as our Priests retire with little prospect of replacements.

Our Pastoral forum as part of the planning for the way ahead, are constantly sharing their resources and experiences. This has been very fruitful in building up parishes and developing relationships. This newsletter is to be issued on a quarterly basis to keep all the faithful informed of the progress and the challenges we make and face.

Every parish needs more of its parishioners to be co-responsible for its daily running and to come up with inventive solutions to the challenges it faces. Each parish should have a suggestion box for this purpose.

We have come together as a Community of Faith to ensure our future together. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future". *Jeremiah 29:11*

YOUTH WEEKEND | 1-3 FEBRUARY |



I HAVE CALLED YOU BY YOUR NAME

YOU ARE MINE

KOINONIA IRELAND'S ANNUAL YOUTH WEEKEND

God loves you & has a plan for your life!

AND NOTHING IS BETTER IN LIFE THAN SAYING YES TO GOD'S CALL!

BUT IT ISN'T ALWAYS EASY TO HEAR HIM, OR HAVE THE COURAGE TO STEP INTO THE ADVENTURE GOD HAS PLANNED!

Fr. Alvaro will lead us through a weekend of fun, activities and teaching all geared to hearing that special call that God has for us.

FRIDAY 1ST - SUNDAY 3RD FEBRUARY

PARISH OF THE BRAID WITH FR. ALVARO GRAMMATICA

BOOK ASAP - RESIDENTIAL PLACES ARE LIMITED | €35 (ALL INCLUSIVE - HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION)
CONTACT DARREN: DARREN@KOINONIA.IE OR REGISTER AT
HTTPS://KOINONIAYOUTHWEEKEND2019.EVENTBRITE.CO.UK

PARISH OF THE BRAID: Koinonia John the Baptist have organised a weekend for 11-18-year olds (residential option available for 13-17s), jam-packed with games, group activities and time with the Lord and each other. It's a safe place for you to ask burning questions about God, and an event full of faith, fun and friendship with young people from across the Diocese. It can also count towards your Pope John Paul II Award. Interested? Contact Br. Darren: darren@koinonia.ie/07752 154369, or for more info/book a place visit <https://koinoniayouthweekend2019.eventbrite.co.uk> Full weekend costs £35. Places are limited so register ASAP.

Passing On The Faith.

In his latest teaching Rejoice and be Glad! Pope Francis reminds us that we have been created for happiness, not some bland, mediocre existence. True happiness is experienced by those trying to be saints in the nitty-gritty of everyday living. 'Do not be afraid of holiness' says the Pope. 'It will take away none of our energy, vitality or joy.' On the contrary, 'it is an attainable goal which is in fact the source of our greatest joy.' If we learn to depend on God, and discern our own path to holiness, we are set free from 'every form of enslavement.' We become who God means us to be, fully human and alive to the world. We are faithful to our deepest selves. In his usual personable and pastoral style, Pope Francis addresses false interpretations of holiness, provides a fresh look at the beatitudes, and offers practical ways to apply Jesus' words to daily life. He encourages us to be 'the saint next door.' Whether we be mums or dads, students or lawyers, teachers or builders, we must 'live our lives in love' and 'bear witness' to God in all we do. This doesn't mean big, dramatic actions. We are not to be 'swimming in mystic rapture' or walking around with 'lowered eyes.' The daily sacrifices made by loving parents raising children, or 'small gestures' like deciding not to pass on gossip can move us in the direction of holiness.

Parish Pastoral Councils Gathering

In line with this Encyclical Fr John Forsythe will be holding an illustrated talk for all pastoral councils in our community on Thursday the 24th of January @ 7.30pm in Ballymoney parish hall.

Ballymoney parish Adult Faith development programme.

These Dates below are provisional, and Kieran Hill can be contacted for registration and confirmation of Dates

@ kc.hill@btinternet.com/27662033

Ballymoney Parish Adult Faith Development Programme	Number of Sessions	Provisional Dates	Location	Cost	Facilitators
Beloved Disciples Inspiring course on Spirituality for the over Sixties Pope Francis has been reminding us all that 'older people are a treasure'. This profound and enjoyable course will help many to feel new value and serve with fresh confidence.	4 Sessions	February - 6,13,20 27 Wednesday AM 11.30- 12.45pm	Ballymoney Parish	Voluntary Subscription for Cafe Programme Group	James Stinson Frankie McBride Kieran Hill
Brief overview of Old Testament Pentateuch and Related Biblical History Stand alone or in preparation for The Big Picture	3 Sessions	February 12,19,26 Tuesdays 7-8.30pm	Ballymoney Parish	Free	Kieran Hill
The Big Picture Bible Course 'You the Bible and God's Big Plan' Inspiring step by step journey through Salvation History	12 Sessions In Two Parts	Part 1 (Sess 1-6) March 12,19, 26 April 2, 9, 16 Tuesday PM 7-8.30pm	Ballymoney Parish	£10 for Book and personal DVD Available now from Parochial House	Kieran Hill Susan Hargan
Let it Be How Mary helps us to be filled with God Filmed around the world with well-known experts and down-to-earth testimonies about how the example and prayer of Mary can help us grow in our everyday faith.	5 Sessions	May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Wednesday PM 7-8.30pm	Ballymoney Parish	£5 for Book Available now from Parochial House	Kieran Hill Susan Hargan
Beloved Disciples Inspiring course on Spirituality for the over Sixties Pope Francis has been reminding us all that 'older people are a treasure'. This profound and enjoyable course will help many to feel new value and serve with fresh confidence.	4 Sessions	May 21, 28 June 4, 11 Tuesday PM 7-8.15pm	Ballymoney Parish	Voluntary Subscription for Cafe Programme Group	James Stinson Frankie McBride Kieran Hill