

WELCOME TO ST BRIGID'S PARISH



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Welcome from Very Reverend Edward O'Donnell, Parish Priest

My dear friends

The welcome that Jesus had for all was the hallmark of His ministry. In this way Jesus allowed us to see into the heart of God. Pope Francis has said, "Let us remember this in our lives as Christians: God always waits for us, even when we have left Him behind! He is never far from us, and if we return to Him, He is ready to embrace us". God's heart is a welcoming heart and reaches out in Jesus to embrace all people.

Our parish life, to have real meaning, must seek consciously and deliberately to have the same disposition as Jesus, so that all who come to us and live among us experience a warm welcome, Céad míle fáilte. What is at the heart of God is what must be at the heart of our Parish. Welcome is to be our very heartbeat. When people are welcomed they begin to feel they belong, they feel at home. May our parish vision be that all may feel welcome and in being welcome so know the embrace of God's love!

This little booklet "**Welcome to St. Brigid's Parish**", as well as giving general information, is an introduction to parish life in St. Brigid's through the groups and organisations that exist in the Parish. New members are always welcome to join in one or more of these parish groups. Belonging and being involved are very closely related.

I thank the members of the Parish Pastoral Council whose initiative this booklet is and particularly Sheelagh McRandal, who led the working party which undertook the compilation of the information within. This booklet allows us to see not only what goes on in the Parish, but that the Parish is to be, in the words of Pope St. John Paul II "*a house of welcome for all and a place of service to all*".

Fr. Edward O'Donnell
Parish Priest



1.2 Parish Vision and Mission Statement

“St. Brigid's Parish will be warm and embracing to all, actively seeking to encourage and develop knowledge and practice of our faith. Following the example of St. Brigid and guided by the Holy Spirit we will seek to be recognised by our actions as proclaimers of God's Word and true followers of Christ.”

The Mission for St Brigid's Parish Pastoral Council

The Parish Pastoral Council has been given the mission to realise this vision for the Parish.

“Through prayer, reflection and working with the priests and laity, the Parish Pastoral Council will develop the means by which the Parish will move forward on its spiritual journey.”

1.3 St Brigid's Parish - A Short Parish History

The original St. Brigid's Church, dedicated on 19th February 1893 and costing £3,000, was designed as a chapel of ease to St. Malachy's, primarily to accommodate the Catholic domestic staff working in the large houses in the Malone area. As Belfast continued to expand southwards the need for a separate parish was recognised and the then Bishop of Down and Connor, Dr. Henry, in 1898 established the boundaries of a new parish under the patronage of St. Brigid.

The population of the new parish grew gradually and by 1960 numbered about 3,000. As the Church was by now becoming too small for the congregation, it was decided to extend the seating capacity from 300 to 550. However, the population continued to expand and at the same time the original church building was showing signs of its age. It became clear that the only feasible solution was to build a new church with a seating capacity of 800. Building commenced on 1st February 1993, the feast of St. Brigid and the new Church of St. Brigid was solemnly blessed and dedicated by Bishop Patrick Walsh on Sunday 18th December 1994.

St. Bride's Primary School was opened in 1902. The annual enrolment during the next fifty

years or so averaged about 150 pupils. However, that had increased to almost 300 by 1960 and in 1974 a new school was opened with an enrolment of 323 pupils. The number of pupils continued to increase and when the Ashleigh Girls' School came on the market, it was bought to allow further development to St. Bride's Primary School. Today St. Bride's is a thriving school with an enrolment of over 800 pupils.

The "troubles" that engulfed Northern Ireland after 1969 also visited St. Brigid's. Several families in the Parish sustained the painful loss of a loved one through violence. The names of these innocent victims are recorded on a plaque mounted on the wall close to the Sacristy of the Church.



The original St Brigid's Church was dedicated on

19th February

1893

Parish History acknowledgement:
Macaulay, Ambrose, Rt. Rev. Monsignor;
St. Brigid's, Belfast - A Centenary Record,
1994

2.0

Masses, Sacraments & Services

2.1 Mass Times

Sundays:

Vigil Mass 6.00pm Saturday,
9.00am, 10.30am,
12 noon

Weekdays:

Monday-Friday 9.30am
Saturday 12 noon

Evening Masses:

Monday, Wednesday
and Friday 7.00pm

Holy Days:

7.00pm [Vigil], 9.30am,
1.00pm and 7.00pm

2.2 Sacrament of Reconciliation [Confession]

Monday

7.30pm - 8.00pm

Friday

6.30pm - 6.55pm

Saturday

12.30pm - 1.00pm
5.30pm - 5.55pm

2.3 Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Parishioners volunteer to spend a given thirty minute period in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Mondays from after 7.00pm Mass to 8.00pm and on Fridays from after 9.30am Mass to 12 noon (except during July and August). They pray particularly for vocations to the priesthood. New volunteers are welcomed.

2.4 Altar Servers

The servers perform an important part in the worthy and dignified celebration of the Liturgy. Any parent of a boy or girl (aged 10+) wishing to become a server should contact the Parish Priest.

2.5 Care of the Sick

A parishioner who is seriously ill may receive the Sacrament of the Sick. If the person is in hospital, they should ask the nurse in charge to contact the hospital Chaplain. If the person is at home or living in a residential or nursing home within St. Brigid's Parish they should contact the Parish Priest.

A parishioner who is housebound or unable to attend Sunday Mass can receive Holy Communion at home; to make this arrangement contact the Parish Priest.

2.6 Children of the Parish attending other schools

Parents are the first teachers of their children and St. Brigid's Primary School will support parents of the Parish in this task. Those who choose to send their children to other schools are at the same time accepting full responsibility for the religious upbringing of their children. This is their right and privilege. The Parish will endeavour to ensure that, with the parents' co-operation, these children will be adequately prepared for the reception of the sacraments. It is important that parents enrol their child for the appropriate sacrament in the first month of the school year i.e. September. Parents will then be kept fully informed regarding the Parish pre-sacramental programme and are expected to participate. See Ashleigh Group 6.2.

2.7 First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation

In St. Brigid's Primary School, children receive religious education on the sacraments in Primary Three (First Penance), Primary Four (First Holy Communion) and Primary Seven (Confirmation). However, running alongside this, there is sacramental preparation in the Parish involving both children and parents. Parents are expected to attend a Parish meeting to enrol their children for a sacrament appropriate to their child's development. Parents are also asked to attend parish pre-sacramental meetings during the year; to take part in the Sunday Enrolment Mass and the Penitential Service. These are announced well in advance. This pre-sacramental preparation is vital in helping parents to recognise and assume their responsibility with regard to handing on the Catholic faith to their children.

2.8 Funerals

In celebrating a funeral we strive to bring consolation and hope to the bereaved and pray that the dead may obtain God's mercy and have eternal rest in peace. (Adapted from the statement by the Episcopal Commission for Liturgy, November 2003)



2.8.1 Celebrating a Catholic Funeral

When a death occurs it is a traumatic time for the bereaved. As well as contacting the relatives, the family doctor and the funeral director, it is also important to contact one of the priests as quickly as possible. It is a central theme of the priest's pastoral ministry at the time of death to lead the bereaved in prayer and to console them. Please do not make firm arrangements for the funeral before discussing them with a priest of the Parish.

The death of a Christian is not the end of life, but rather a transformation in an onward journey towards eternal life with God. We believe that this call to eternal life begins for all Christians in the waters of Baptism. Nevertheless, for those family and friends who are bereaved there is sadness in parting, and death, when it comes, even when it has been expected, such as after a long illness, always leaves a sense of loss and shock. The Catholic Church has over the centuries developed a rich tradition in its liturgy for funerals. This liturgy seeks to balance the need to console those who are mourning with the hope in the person of Jesus Christ who is our "life and our resurrection". The Catholic funeral rites commend the deceased to the mercy of God, and as we give thanks to God for the life of a Christian, we pray that God may forgive whatever sins the deceased may have committed through human weakness.

2.8.2 Cremation

The Rite of Committal comes after the conclusion of the funeral rites and is the final act of the Christian community in caring for the body of its deceased member. It may be celebrated at the grave, or as is becoming more common, at the crematorium. If the deceased is cremated the Church insists that the ashes, which are the mortal remains of a person "made in the image and likeness of God" Genesis 1:26, are placed in a recognised final resting place. Ashes are to be respected as a body would be by burial, therefore, they are not to be divided or scattered, but are to be reverently buried or placed in a columbarium i.e. a place designed for the interment of ashes.



2.8.3 The Word of the Lord

A variety of suitable readings are offered both for the Old and New Testaments for the Funeral Mass. It is essential that these readings should be read clearly and with sensitivity. A member of the family [over 16 yrs] or family friend may undertake these readings. However, pressure should not be placed on anyone to read, particularly if he/she is not a regular reader at Mass. It is, of course, presumed that whoever reads is a believer and is living his or her faith. If required a parish reader will be available to undertake this ministry. The readings are taken from the Sacred Scripture and may not be replaced by secular readings.

The homily is given by the priest and is based on the scriptures and the life of the departed in that he or she tried to live out the virtues of being a Christian. The homilist, by his words, is also especially called to seek to bring comfort and consolation to those bereaved.

The Prayer of the Faithful [general intercessions] calls upon God to bring comfort to those who mourn and to show mercy to the deceased. Members of the family or friends of the deceased may also wish to participate in these prayers. If the families compose them, clear guidelines, provided by the celebrant, are to be followed.



2.8.4 The Gifts We Offer in Faith

The gifts to be presented for the Eucharist are traditionally the bread and wine. It is recommended that members of the family of the deceased bring these to the altar. It is not appropriate at this stage of the Mass to bring up symbols of the deceased's life. To do so is a confusion of the presentation of the bread and wine, which become the Eucharist for us. Furthermore, "gifts" are "given" not merely as a "symbol" or gesture, which are taken back at the end of the Mass. If it is desired that suitable symbols associated with the interests or work of the deceased be part of the funeral rites then they should be carried into the Church with the reception of the remains.

2.8.5 Liturgical Music and Hymns

Music offers the community a way of expressing convictions and feelings that words alone may fail to convey. Music has the capacity to uplift those who are mourning and strengthens the assembly in faith and love and creates a spirit of hope. Music chosen for the Funeral Mass should primarily be in praise and thanksgiving to God. Musicians, choirs and soloists must plan the content in consultation with the priest, who is celebrating the Funeral Liturgy. Non-liturgical music is not to be used during the Funeral Mass. The use of taped music during the celebration of Mass is to be strongly discouraged as it is an intrusion into the celebration of a living worshipping community.

2.8.6 Remembrances and Acknowledgements

There are occasions when a member of the family may choose to speak to the mourners. Some personal sentiments are more appropriately spoken in the intimacy of the family home or funeral home. Other words in the form of a eulogy are better suited to the traditional location of the graveside. If a few words of remembrance of the deceased and an acknowledgement to those who have supported the grief of the family are to be given, only one family member should speak. It should be undertaken with the agreement of the celebrant and the prepared text should be discussed with that celebrant.

2.8.7 Anniversary Masses

If a family wishes to have a Month's Mind Mass or an anniversary Mass celebrated they are asked to contact the Parish Office.

2.8.8 Annual Mass for the Bereaved of the Parish

During November a special Parish Mass is celebrated for parishioners and relatives of parishioners who have been bereaved. Individual invitations are issued to those who have been bereaved in the previous year and a general invitation is extended to parishioners who wish to take part. The date is published in the weekly Parish Bulletin.



2.9 Inter-Church Services *(Faith Seeking Understanding)*

South Belfast Churches Together consists of churches in the Malone/Stranmillis/Lisburn Road area. A committee, made up of members from each of the churches, comes together to organise inter-church events. It arranges inter-church talks and discussions on topics such as, the worship of each of the churches and the difference between the Christian communities. The committee organises a Lenten programme of Scripture Study and inter-church services.



2.10 Mass for Students

There are special Masses for young people in October at the beginning of the academic year and in May before the academic examinations begin.

2.11 Pastoral Community

In a further development of the Living Church initiative in the Diocese, the Bishop has organised the parishes of Down and Connor into a number of groups of parishes known as Pastoral Communities. St. Brigid's is within the South and East Belfast Pastoral Community - along with Drumbo, Holy Rosary, St. Anthony's, St. Bernadette's, St. Colmcille's, St. Malachy's and St. Matthew's. In November 2017, a Pastoral Community Forum (PCF) was set up to facilitate cooperation among the eight parishes on pastoral and allied matters. Two members of each parish and the priests of those parishes constitute the PCF.

2.12 Penitential Services

Parish Penitential Services are arranged during Advent and Lent. They are also arranged for the children preparing for the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation.

2.13 Reception of Holy Communion: Those with Particular Needs

Those who have a coeliac condition can receive Holy Communion in the form of a low-gluten host. Simply approach in the Communion procession and indicate to the priest who has celebrated the Mass that you wish to receive a low-gluten host. Please note that the low-gluten host will contain an extremely small proportion of gluten and is therefore not entirely gluten free.

Arrangements can also be made for those with impaired mobility to receive Holy Communion. They can sit in the front seat of the Church where Holy Communion will be given to them. Alternatively, if they prefer they may sit near the back of the Church and a member of the St. Vincent de Paul, if notified, will arrange for an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to bring Holy Communion to them.

2.14 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (R.C.I.A.)

Thinking of becoming a Catholic? Most Catholics enter the Church through Baptism as infants and receive the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist (Confession and First Holy Communion) and Confirmation when young. However, there are many people who become Catholics or receive the sacraments they have previously missed in later life. They decide for different reasons:

- some are already Christians from other traditions attracted by the teaching of the Catholic Church and by the example of individual Catholics they know
- some are non-Catholics who have been coming regularly to Mass for years with their spouse and children. They now wish to become full members of the Church
- some have had no previous contact with the Church at all but have this inner calling to discover the truth about the most important questions of life.

If any of the above situations applies to you and you wish to enquire further please contact the Parish Priest.



2.15 The Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism is celebrated in St. Brigid's Parish on the first and third Sunday of each month at 2.00pm. It is a joyful occasion for both the family and the Parish. To arrange a Baptism please contact the Parish Office, giving a minimum of one month's notice. Prior to the Baptism the Parish Baptismal Team will make contact with the families concerned. The visit of the Parish Baptismal Team is an expression of the parish community supporting parents at this important occasion in their faith lives. Parents are helped to appreciate the rich meaning of the words and symbols of the Baptismal Liturgy and to understand the commitment they are making when they ask to have their child baptised. Parents are presented with the gift of a Baptismal Candle from the Parish by members of the Baptismal Team who visit them.

2.16 The Sacrament of Marriage

A minimum of six months notice is required and applies even if the wedding is to take place in another parish. This is to enable marriage preparation to take place and the pre-nuptial documentation completed. Please, do not confirm other wedding arrangements until you are sure that the priest and church are available on the date and at the time you desire. Points to remember:

- a marriage may be celebrated only on the date, at the place and by the Officiant listed on the Marriage Schedule
- it is very important that all the paperwork for marriages, both that relating to the Church requirement and that relating to civil requirements, should be completed in good time. The Church does not have the authority to waive civil procedural requirements
- in addition to the above, the usual procedures in Church Law must be followed.

Couples are expected to attend a pre-marriage course. The priest will advise when such courses are available and also what documentation is needed before the wedding may take place. Arrangements for photography, music, flowers etc. must be discussed with the priest and be acceptable to the Parish.

The priest is responsible for advising you and helping you to prepare for marriage, he will be happy to discuss matters with you and answer your queries; he will help you meet the essential points mentioned above.

A booklet "Getting Married in St. Brigid's" is available from the Parish Office.

3.0 Administration

3.1 Parish Office

The Parish Office is located at:

40 Derryvolgie Avenue

Belfast

BT9 6FP

Office Hours: 9.00 am – 1.00 pm

Monday to Friday.

The office is closed on Public Holidays.

Telephone: 028 9066 5409

Voicemail is in operation after 1.00 pm and pastoral emergencies will be dealt with.

Email: stbrigids@downandconnor.org

3.2 Parish Website

The parish website is updated on a regular basis.

www.stbrigidsparishbelfast.org

3.3 Parish Registration

It is important for purposes related to the life in the Parish e.g. schooling, visitations, care and support, that new parishioners register with the Parish. This can be done by contacting the Parish Office and completing a registration card which can be found at the back of the Church, or by the contact form available through the parish website. Parishioners who change address can similarly have their records amended.



3.4 Bulletin Notices

Please ensure that any notices for inclusion in the weekly Parish Bulletin arrive in the Parish Office on the Wednesday prior to the weekend of publication. Not all the notices submitted can always be included due to space constraints. Priority is always given to parish notices. Advertisements are not published. Names for inclusion in the 'Anniversary List' may be submitted in writing, by telephone or email. The weekly Parish Bulletin keeps parishioners informed about events in the Parish and the Diocese.

3.5 Baptism Arrangements

Please contact the Parish Office, giving a minimum of one month's notice. See Section 2.15 in this booklet

3.6 Certificates

Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage Certificates may be ordered by telephone or by calling personally at the Parish Office. Certificates can only be collected by the person concerned or by next of kin. Passport application forms are not signed.

3.7 Church Collectors and Counters

The collectors assist with the practical aspects of the Sunday Liturgy and organise the taking up of the collection. The Parish Counting Group is made up of volunteers. The Parish is working towards the position of having a list of volunteers and this would allow for a rota to be organised.

All this is done in accordance with the Diocesan Regulations for Parishes in regard to Financial Controls and Related Processes.

If interested in volunteering please contact the Parish Priest.

3.8 Funeral Arrangements

Please contact the Parish Office
See Section 2.8 in this booklet.

3.9 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

From the 25th May 2018, the Diocese of Down and Connor has a privacy notice to ensure compliance with the GDPR. St. Brigid's Parish operates under the terms of this notice, the details of which are available on the parish website.

3.10 Parish Collection Envelopes

The new boxes of Parish Collection Envelopes are distributed at the beginning of April each year. A parishioner not receiving a box and who wishes to do so should contact the Parish Office. Standing Order Forms are available should parishioners find this a more convenient way of contributing to the Parish. The collection taken up every Sunday at Mass is vital for the general upkeep of the Parish and to help reduce parish debt.

General Upkeep of the Parish

The white weekly collection envelopes are used solely for this purpose.

Upkeep of the Clergy

The three [blue] voluntary collection envelopes at Easter, September and Christmas and the [pink] 'monthly offering' envelopes are the only contributions which go towards the upkeep of the clergy of the Diocese.

3.11 Special Envelopes

There are nine [orange] envelopes or 'Special Collections' taken up during the year. They are as follows:-

Bishops' Commissions

This collection is to assist in financing the many Commissions set up by the Irish Bishops, e.g. the Faith and Justice Commission, The Family Life Commission, Ecumenism, Communications, etc.

Diocesan Cathedral Fund

Used for the upkeep of St. Peter's Cathedral.

Diocesan Pastoral Services

The Bishop nominates each year the Pastoral Service or activity for which this collection is used.

Diocesan Youth Commission

For youth programmes in the Diocese of Down and Connor.

Education of Diocesan Students

This collection helps to fund the formation of students studying for the Priesthood in the Diocese of Down and Connor.

Needy Parishes

This collection was set up in order that the wealthier parishes in the Diocese can assist those parishes in greater need.

Peter's Pence (Pope's Collection)

The proceeds are collected on a nationwide basis and given by the Church to the Pope for charitable purposes throughout the world, e.g. natural disasters such as earthquakes, famines, etc.

Propagation of the Faith

To help with the promotion of missionary activity throughout the world, especially in the Developing World.

Sick and Retired Priests

For all the priests of the Diocese who, because of sickness or age, are no longer in active pastoral ministry.



3.12 Gift Aid

Parishioners who pay UK Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax can increase the value of their contribution by a significant amount and at no cost to themselves, simply by having a Gift Aid Agreement with the Parish. This allows the Parish to claim back from HM Revenue & Customs the tax already paid on the contribution at source. However, contributions must be paid by the collection envelope, standing order or cheque – cash put on the collection plate cannot be included. The Gift Aid Scheme is simple to operate. For this reason tax-paying parishioners are encouraged to use the Scheme. Please contact the Parish Office for information or complete the Gift Aid card in the box of envelopes and place it in the collection basket on Sunday.

“The Gift Aid Scheme is simple to operate and can be done at no cost or inconvenience to parishioners”



3.13 Wedding Arrangements

Please contact the Parish Office giving a minimum of six months notice
See Section 2.16 in this booklet.

4.0 Management Committees

4.1 St. Brigid's Parish Finance Committee

The Parish Finance Committee is an advisory body to the Parish Priest. The Committee assists the Parish Priest in his task of administering the parish finances, maintaining the parish properties, planning for future capital works and formulating strategies for raising funds.

The Committee, comprising eight members, meets at least four times per annum. It is responsible for preparing and presenting the annual financial statement to the parishioners.

4.2 St. Bride's Parish Hall Management Committee

St. Bride's Hall is situated in Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast. St. Bride's Hall Management Committee was formed to facilitate and ensure the smooth and efficient running of the Hall and the superb facilities which it has to offer. It is run both for and on behalf of the Parish. The Hall has a sports hall, a function/main hall together with many conference/meeting rooms and kitchen facilities. It is available for hire to groups [voluntary and commercial] from both within and outside the Parish.

All enquiries should be made to:
Mr. Paul Rogers
Hall Manager
M: 079 6426 5294



4.3 St. Brigid's Parish Pastoral Council

The Parish Pastoral Council was set up in St Brigid's in 2012 in line with the objectives of the Down and Connor Living Church initiative. Its role is to provide advice and assistance to the priests of the Parish on pastoral activities. In doing so it works in cooperation with other Parish groups described elsewhere in this booklet and, where appropriate, helps initiate new pastoral ventures such as the welcoming activities and scriptural study activities.

The normal membership is twelve parishioners each of whom serves for a four year term; half the members of the first cohort served for only two years in order to set up a rolling programme of renewal and continuity. The Parish Priest acts as the President of the Council and the lay members choose from among their members a Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. The Council reports on its activities to the Parish as a whole - through the annual Parish Coming Together and otherwise.

4.4 St. Brigid's Parish Safeguarding Committee

The Committee members are individuals who have a particular interest and/or experience of safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. Their task is to ensure best practice in safeguarding in St. Brigid's Parish and that children, young people and vulnerable adults experience the highest standards of pastoral care within our Parish.

The Diocesan Policy and Procedures, Codes of Conduct and training set out the safeguarding requirements to enable the Committee to fulfill its duties.

If you have any concerns of a safeguarding nature, you can contact any member of the Parish Safeguarding Committee through the Parish Office.



5.0 Liturgical Groups

5.1 Altar Society

The Altar Society is a voluntary group of women from the Parish, dedicated to looking after the Sanctuary, who work a rota system doing a month at a time. The members are responsible for ensuring that the area within the Sanctuary is at all times in a state of immaculate order as befits this most sacred part of the Church but also decorated with fresh flowers during the week and floral arrangements prepared for Christmas, Easter, First Communion and Confirmation. The Tabernacle and surrounding area are cleaned and polished. Altar cloths are ordered as and when necessary.



For further information on or to join any of these organisations please contact the Parish Office

5.2 Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

The primary function of Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion is to assist at Mass in the distribution of Holy Communion so that the distribution might not be unduly prolonged. Those who undertake this service on behalf of God's people are to be always aware of their important office. They are to be, by their exercise of this ministry, an example to others of the reverence due to the Holy Eucharist. Just as they distribute the Eucharist in the Church so are they to distribute the love of Christ in the world.

The Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, by arrangement with the Parish Priest and with due regard to Parish Safeguarding Procedures, bring Holy Communion to the homebound and sick of the Parish. They are only free to do so within the Parish.

As with Ministers of the Word, each year the Parish seeks new volunteers as Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and provides the necessary training.

5.3 Sacristan

The church sacristan is Michael Lynch whose primary duties are to prepare the Church and altar for all services from daily Mass to weddings and funerals. The sacristan also maintains the Church building and grounds, deals with any health and safety issues and works with all involved in the planning and preparation of special services and celebrations. A number of assistants provide cover when the sacristan is on leave.

Contact:
Michael Lynch
M: 07963 141 278

5.4 St. Brigid's Children's Liturgy Group

St. Brigid's Children's Liturgy Group meet in the Church each Sunday of school term during 10.30am Mass. Children of the Parish attending Primary 3 to 7 are invited to the Church Sacristy following the opening prayers of the Mass to listen to and discuss the Gospel of the day and how the theme of the Gospel can relate to their own lives. The children pray together, reflect on the week just past and how they might adopt the teachings of the Gospel into their upcoming week. They may also complete a worksheet activity or an art project on the theme of the day. A small number of children carry up the gifts as part of the Offertory Procession whilst the remaining children return to their parents for the rest of the Mass. Almost ninety children attend the Group on a regular basis.

The Children's Liturgy Group is made up of dedicated volunteers from the Parish. They apply in writing to the Parish Safeguarding Committee for permission to join and then a weekly rota is prepared.



5.5 St. Brigid's Choir

St. Brigid's Choir provides sung Liturgy each Sunday at 12 noon Mass. The choir meets for rehearsal every Wednesday at 8.00pm – 9.00pm and prior to Mass on Sunday at 11.15 – 11.45am in St. Brigid's Parish Hall. The choir's repertoire extends from Renaissance to Contemporary Sacred Music, with special focus on plainchant.

It provides the music for the Ceremonies at Easter and Christmas as well as hosting a candlelit Advent Carol Service. In addition it hosts a series of recitals.

Niall Leonard, organist and choir director has studied with Nigel McClintock, director of music at St. Peter's Cathedral, and represents the Parish on the Royal Society of Church Music Board.

We are most fortunate in this Parish to have a four part choir, and a wonderful organ constructed in 1999 by Wells Kennedy Partnership. Visiting organists have included James O'Donnell, Westminster Cathedral and Westminster Abbey and David Briggs, Gloucester Cathedral.

The choir is open to all and welcomes all new members.

For further information on or to join any of these organisations please contact the Parish Office

5.6 The Ministry of the Word

Reading the Word of God in the Assembly is in fact a ministry which is very ancient. St. Luke tells us that Jesus himself read the Word of God in the synagogue in Nazareth: "He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath as he usually did. He stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah" [Luke 4:16]

The Word proclaimed is the "Word of the Lord". The reader speaks God's Word. The great dignity of proclamation, compared to mere reading and which makes the reading of Scripture in church special, is that God is speaking to his people.

Therefore, prayerful preparation before proclaiming God's Word enables the reader to first take the Word to his or her heart. Only then can that Word be proclaimed with faith and conviction to the gathered people of God. The person who volunteers for a time to be a reader in the Church provides a life-giving service to the community.

Each year the Parish seeks new volunteers and provides them with the necessary training.

“The provision of a Children's Liturgy Group over recent years has proved a most enjoyable, fulfilling and rewarding experience for all the parents, teachers, supervisors and children that are involved.”

6.0 Sacramental Groups

6.1 Baptism Preparation Group

Parents who have requested Baptism for their child are visited in their homes by two members of the Baptism Team. They speak to the parents about:

- the importance of Baptism
- the responsibility of parents in the ongoing faith development of the child
- the role of the godparents in supporting parents and in handing on the Catholic faith
- the rite and symbols of Baptism are explained

The members help parents to fully understand and participate in this joyful sacrament and a book, candle and relevant leaflets are given to the parents.



6.2 The Ashleigh Group

The Ashleigh Group prepares children who do not attend the Parish Primary School for the sacrament of First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Classes are held in St. Bride's Parish Hall from September through to May.

The group is completely voluntary and works closely with the teachers of St. Bride's Primary School and the Parish Priest.

For further information on or to join any of these organisations please contact the Parish Office



7.0 Parish Outreach Groups

7.1 Apostolic Work

Apostolic Work has branches all over Ireland. The association was set up in 1923 to help missionaries in their work all over the world.

We no longer make vestments but the aims remain - we continue to pray daily for all missionaries and provide financial support to assist with medical needs, water, transport, education, building churches/schools and supplying sacred vessels - in fact anything that helps to improve the lives of people in need. Requests for help from people not known to the office are carefully vetted. Visiting missionaries have all stressed that financial help is their greatest need. 94p in every £1 raised last year went directly to the missions.

Our branch is small and we are anxious to find new members to help us make a great difference.



7.2 Foodbank

St. Brigid's Parish is part of the South Belfast Trussell Trust Foodbank. It provides a minimum of three days nutritionally balanced emergency food and support to local people in crisis. Fifteen other churches are partnered with St. Brigid's in this project.

There are families struggling to put food on the table. For people on low incomes, a sudden crisis - redundancy, benefit delay or even an unexpected bill - can mean going hungry.

Collection of non-perishable food takes place on the first Sunday of every month.

Non-perishable foods and toiletries which are needed:

Long life milk, juice, soup, tinned tomatoes, tinned meat/fish, tinned vegetables, cereals, tea bags, coffee, tinned fruit, rice, jam, tinned custard, biscuits, pasta, pasta sauce, sugar, ladies and gents toiletries.

7.3 Older / Retired Parishioners

The community in our Parish includes a substantial population of retired parishioners, many of whom fulfil essential roles as members of the sacramental, liturgical and community groups at St. Brigid's.

The Parish Pastoral Council, as part of its commitment to being an 'open and welcoming community', has been reflecting on how to include, celebrate and care better for older parishioners, particularly those who find their participation in the life of the Church to be limited by mobility and health issues or caring duties.

Those who are housebound or unable to attend Sunday Mass can receive Holy Communion at home. This can be arranged by contacting the Parish Priest through the Parish Office.

Wednesday mornings after Mass are becoming a focus for activities for those who are free and would like to participate. On the first Wednesday of the month after morning Mass, there is Coffee and Poems and a recent addition, on the third Wednesday the Short Book Club, which combines a cup of coffee, a guided discussion on an agreed text and a chat for about one hour. Both of these have proved very popular and are very well attended.

More initiatives will be forthcoming, so look out for details in the weekly Parish Bulletin and on the parish website.



For further information on or to join any of these organisations please contact the Parish Office

7.4 St. Brigid's Third World Group

The Parish Third World Group was established in 1989 and has raised well over a million pounds since then – our annual income has been around £100,000 in recent years. All money raised goes directly for the relief of poverty in developing countries – we do not spend any of it on administration. The Group is registered with the Charity Commission for NI [Registration Number 102818] and recognised by HMRC for Gift Aid purposes. We divide our income each year between seventeen projects, mainly through nuns and priests from Irish Orders, working in Africa, Asia and South America to provide food and clean water, healthcare, education and training to people suffering from extreme poverty. Donations by regular standing order are the largest single source of income for the Group, raising over £30,000 each year. We hold an Annual Collection in September and receive other donations throughout the year and from legacies.

Our fundraising events include bread and soup lunches in Lent and Advent and table quizzes in January and October. We also organise practice interviews for students applying for medical school each November and around ninety doctors and other professionals give their services on a voluntary basis; parents/students are invited to make a donation to the Group.

We meet at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall on the first Monday of each month from September to April. If you cannot come to meetings you can help in other ways such as making a pot of soup, donating a prize for the ballot at a quiz or serving tea and coffee to those helping at the practice interviews.

E: [stbrigids3wg@gmail](mailto:stbrigids3wg@gmail.com)

W: www.stbrigids3wg.com



7.5 The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

The Society of Saint de Paul, SVdeP, exists to fight poverty. It is an organisation which seeks, in a spirit of justice and charity, to help those in need. In Northern Ireland, the SVdeP has around 2,000 members who work on a voluntary basis through 182 "conferences". We are dedicated to helping those who are disadvantaged, neglected or in need, without discrimination. Our work is based on respect for people's dignity and seeks to help people to help themselves, primarily through home visitation, offering friendship, support, advice and practical help.

Each year, thanks to the generosity of parishioners, St. Brigid's Conference is able to distribute around £50,000 to provide financial assistance, food, clothing, furniture, electrical items, fuel and education for those in need. Many of those we help are unemployed, homeless, families on low income, migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, ex-prisoners and those who are facing difficulties through loneliness, illness or relationship breakdown.

Whilst South Belfast is, in general, a relatively affluent area, there is real poverty and hardship in particular districts of the Parish.

Anyone seeking to help or interested in assisting us with our work should contact SVdeP Headquarters at:

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
196-200 Antrim Road
Belfast BT15 2AJ
T: 028 9035 1561
E: info@svpni.co.uk

7.6 Welcoming Team Ministry

The Welcoming Ministry was formed in 2015. Its role is to provide a welcoming environment that is outreaching, inviting and inclusive to all members of the Parish and visitors.

We aim to develop and enhance parish life through community building by sharing a welcoming spirit on entering the Church. We aspire to establish an atmosphere of love, family, belonging and spirituality. Parishioners and visitors are encouraged to become involved in our community of faith.

If you would like to become involved in a parish ministry, the Welcoming Team is your answer!

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me”

[Matthew 25:35]

For further information on or to join any of these organisations please contact the Parish Office

8.0 Faith Groups

8.1 The GIFT Programme

GIFT stands for Growing in Faith Together. It is a fun faith programme run over six weeks for 12 to 16 year olds [Years 8 to 11] on Sunday evenings from 6.45pm to 8.45pm in the Parish Hall. There are five programmes in all based on age and each one runs at a different time. They are advertised well in advance in the weekly Parish Bulletin.

On leaving primary school many of our young people move to different schools. GIFT, which is a follow up on Confirmation, helps to keep them connected to one another, their Parish and ultimately to God. We aim to give them space to explore what it means to be a young Christian today and to support them as they continue their journey in faith together.

Each year of GIFT has a different theme and the young people are offered a wide variety of opportunities and experiences based on this theme. At the end of GIFT 5 the young people go on a pilgrimage to Rome staying in the Irish College. It has proved to be a wonderful and most enjoyable trip for all concerned.

Our ultimate aim is to form a community that nurtures and supports the faith of its members. We wish to walk with our young people just as Jesus did with his disciples on the road to Emmaus. Revealing Christ by being present for our young people as we all grow in faith together.

8.2 St. Brigid's Youth Faith Group

Since 2006, St. Brigid's Youth Faith Group has provided the young people of our Parish with an opportunity to have their say and express their views on a variety of issues in relation to their faith, their social awareness and their personal identities. The young people are aged 16 and over, and they set their own agenda, with the advice and assistance of the Group facilitators. Guest speakers and research topics are suggested, discussion and debate is encouraged and everyone is encouraged to contribute. All opinions are welcomed and treated in a non-judgemental and respectful manner.

The Group has become involved with associations outside the Parish and has visited a local hostel for homeless men, providing them with gifts at Christmas.

They have visited the local Islamic Centre, giving them a chance to gain further insight into other religious communities. They help out with Masses at Easter and occasionally provide refreshments for parishioners after Mass.

Many have travelled to Lourdes on the Annual Diocesan Pilgrimage which takes place in July. Strong and lasting friendships are made there, especially with young people from other parishes in our Diocese. Volunteers from St. Brigid's have made up almost one fifth of the entire Youth Team in recent years.

The Youth Faith Group meets on a Sunday evening, mostly during term time, beginning at 7pm in the Parish Hall. Anyone aged 16 and over is welcome.

8.4 Day of Prayer for Life

The Day of Prayer for Life is an invitation by the Parish Pastoral Council to everyone in our Parish Community to join in a prayer vigil for the protection of human life from conception until natural death. It was considered very appropriate to organise our first vigil on 8th December 2016, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and our Day for Life was prayerfully entrusted to our Holy Mother. Our Vigil is now an annual event on 8th December.

The Vigil includes Mass with a focused homily and prayers of intercession, rosary, Confession, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, silent prayer and reflection. The Vigil in 2018 included a number of speakers on "Life". We are aware of the serious threats to human life today throughout the world including our own island. Our own parish prayer implores Christ to give all who believe in Him the courage to proclaim, with honesty and love, the Gospel of Life, to the people of our time.

8.3 Youth Alpha

"Youth Alpha" is an interactive series of gatherings held in conjunction with three other parishes in our Pastoral Community, to help young people to connect with one another, to discover and deepen their relationship with Jesus and to allow them to explore the basics of the Christian faith.

The series runs over a ten week period, on Sunday evenings from 7.00pm to 9.00pm, in the first term of the academic year. Conversation is stimulated by a short video input. This is done in a relaxed environment, over a meal, with one's peers.

8.5 SPRED (Down and Connor)

SPRED stands for Special Religious Educational Development and aims to assist people with learning disabilities achieve their rights to belong and grow within the Parish and wider communities. St Brigid's SPRED Group meets on Monday evenings in the Parish Hall. Our friends with disabilities come once a fortnight and in the intervening Mondays the helpers meet to evaluate what has happened and to plan the next meeting. Each meeting follows a format and aims to develop the religious spirituality of both our special friends and our helper catechists.

We begin by sharing an activity session aimed at creating a calming and reflective atmosphere. Then we gather round the Holy Book. Here we use different symbols in each session to evoke personal, simple stories and experiences about the presence of God on our lives. In the Agape, we share some simple food, a cup of tea and enjoy each other's company.

SPRED seeks to celebrate the gifts and talents of each individual and to care and protect the vulnerable.

Meetings take place in a warm and caring atmosphere with much shared love and laughter.

8.6 The Focolare Movement

When a young Italian woman, Chiara Lubich, consecrated her life to God in December 1943 in Northern Italy, little could she have imagined the extraordinary consequences. From her 'Yes' grew the Focolare movement, now present in 182 countries, including Ireland. It involves people in a revolution based on living the Gospel. Urged by Jesus' prayer – 'Father may they all be one' [John 17:21], the commitment was made to live and work for this unity: in families, within the Catholic Church, between the Church. Unity comes about through dialogue which requires being able to listen attentively to others.

An international Focolare community for Northern Ireland is based in the Parish. The Word of Life leaflet which can be found at the back of the Church is available for reflection. Every first Wednesday of the month people interested in spirituality gather to share their experiences of Gospel practice. Throughout the month there are also different programmes for children, youth and young adults. All are welcome to visit!

For further information see www.focolare.org or contact nirlfoc@focolare.ie

For further information on or to join any of these organisations please contact the Parish Office

8.7 The Lay Dominicans

We are lay men and women members of the Dominican Order - the Order of Preachers founded by St. Dominic. We are organised in groups called Chapters. The Chapter of the Immaculate Heart of Mary & St. Malachy meets in the Parish Hall every third Monday at 7.30pm. Inspired by St. Dominic, our mission is to spread God's word by study, prayer and preaching in keeping with our lay state. Meetings include the Prayer of the Church, a talk, contemplation and discussion of Scripture.

8.8 The Rosary Group

The rosary is recited immediately before Mass, morning and evening, by a dedicated group of parishioners.

The rosary itself is a summary of the New Testament. In the rosary we find the mysteries of Christ's revelation of God in the world. When we meditate on the mysteries of the rosary whilst praying the prayers, we meditate on the truths contained in Sacred Scripture. The Holy Rosary is a veritable fountain of grace and spiritual riches. Everyone is welcome to participate.

The Popes have continuously and consistently stressed the value of reciting the rosary every day. "Would you like me to tell you a secret? It is simple and after all, is no secret, "pray, pray much. Say the rosary every day" Pope St. John Paul II.



9.0

Youth and Other Groups

9.1 Derryvolgie Bridge Club

Derryvolgie Bridge Club was founded in 1977, by Father Sean McCartney and meets in 30 Windsor Avenue. Over the years, the Club has gone from strength to strength and is now the largest bridge club in Northern Ireland, drawing its membership from all walks of life and all sections of society.

Whether you come to play the game or to learn Bridge, you will find the Club friendly and welcoming. The Parish and countless hardworking club members can feel justifiably proud of Derryvolgie Bridge Club.

The Club plays duplicate bridge on Sunday/Wednesday and Thursday nights. There is a special night on Tuesday for novices. There is also duplicate bridge on Wednesday afternoon. All visitors are welcome.

9.2 Coffee and Poems

Each month, usually on the first Wednesday, after the morning Mass, parishioners and the priests of the Parish meet in St. Bride's Parish Hall for about an hour to share one another's company and a love of poetry. At the gatherings,

those present are invited to read favourite poems (or sometimes short sections of prose) aloud; some members also present samples of their own writing. All are always welcome - it's part of our efforts to bind the Parish together.

9.3 Hospitality

A small but dedicated group of parishioners help to provide hospitality on special Parish occasions, such as Lenten Talks, Ecumenical talks with neighbouring parishes and the Parish Coming Together. Help is always needed so if you are interested, please contact the Parish Office.

9.4 St. Brigid's Bowling Club

The Club was established in 1989 and is one of the church based bowling clubs in Belfast. Membership has averaged around 25 members but there is no limit. The members play short mat bowls, an all year sport unaffected by weather conditions and particularly appropriate for small communities as it can be played in village halls, schools and sports and social clubs. It is a low cost sport for people of all ages and no prior skill is required.

New members are always welcome and are invited to come and have a go. The Club meets on a Thursday night in the St. Brigid's Parish Hall to practise, play friendly games against local teams [Fisherwick, McCracken, Ballycairn etc.] and enter teams for various leagues and competitions.

9.5 St. Brigid's GAC

St. Brigid's GAC celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2018 and in a relatively short time has grown to become one of the largest sporting clubs in Belfast, with over 850 member of all ages playing Gaelic football, ladies football and hurling. The club shares facilities with Harlequins Rugby Club at Deramore Park and has its own two flood-lit pitches and changing rooms at Musgrave Park.

For many members, their first introduction to St. Brigid's GAC comes when they bring their children to the primary age "Fun Sunday" group who enjoy their weekly session from 12 noon to 1.00pm every Sunday at Harlequins.

The Club has a strong emphasis on youth. Our club motto "Mol an Óige" is an abbreviation of an old Irish saying: "Mol an Óige agus tiocaidh siad" which translates as "Praise our youth and they will come through." Our young teams regularly enjoy success at County level. Many of these young players have now risen through the ranks to represent Antrim as well.

9.6 St. Brigid's Parent and Toddler Group

The Group reformed in 2005 and has grown from strength to strength. It meets in the basement of the Parish Hall on a Thursday from 10.00am to 11.45am. It is closed on school holidays and during the summer months.

There is a small entrance fee per family and it is attended by mums, dads, grandparents and child minders. It is always looking for volunteers to help make tea, coffee etc. and tidy up.

Facebook.com/St Brigid's parents and toddlers group

9.7 The Short Book Club

As a particular Pastoral Council attempt to widen the range of regular activities to make parishioners, particularly older and retired ones, feel welcome and involved in Parish life, a book club now meets on the third Wednesday of each month in the Parish Hall to discuss a book that everyone will have had the opportunity to read in the previous month. It's called the Short Book Club because the chosen books are around 250 pages or less - making them more manageable than War and Peace or Harry Potter.

So - if you like reading and chatting [or even just listening to the craic] - just come along. Maybe you'll bring a neighbour with you who might not otherwise get out and about much?

10.0 Publications

10.1 Getting Married in St. Brigid's

Practical advice on arranging a wedding in the Church, available from the Parish Office.

10.2 St. Brigid's Parish Prayer Book

This little prayer book contains the prayers old and new to help us in our daily life. There are morning and evening prayers, for meal times, for the sacraments, to Our Lady, for busy days and everyday life.

All houses in the Parish receive a copy and additional ones are available through the Parish Office.

10.3 Weekly Parish Bulletin

The weekly Parish Bulletin contains a wealth of information about the daily running of the Parish. It has the times of Masses, information on celebrating the Liturgy, a resumé of the Sunday's readings, anniversary notices, details of activities run by parish organisations and much more.

It is distributed by members of the Welcome Group at all the Sunday Masses and copies are available in the Church during the week.

10.4 Welcome to St. Brigid's Parish

The booklet you are reading is our Welcome Booklet. As well as giving general information it is an introduction to parish life in St. Brigid's through its groups and organisations.

All houses in the Parish receive a copy and additional ones are available in the Church porch.



11.0 Other Institutions Served

11.1 *Care Homes*

Every month the Parish Priest visits parishioners in the care homes in the Parish to bring them Holy Communion. If requested by the Home or the family, he will also provide the Sacrament of the Sick. Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are available to bring Holy Communion by arrangement with the Parish Priest and with due regard to the Parish Safeguarding procedures.

The homes served are: Abbeyfield, Adelaide House, Bethany House, Redlands, Victoria Nursing Home.

11.2 *Harberton Special Care School*

Pupils of the Harberton Special Care School come to St. Brigid's Parish where the Parish Priest arranges for them to receive First Penance, First Communion and Confirmation.



12.0 Parish School

The Parish is served by St. Bride's Primary School and Nursery Unit which is situated beside St. Brigid's Church on Derryvolgie Avenue.

There are 52 children in the Nursery Unit and approximately 820 children in the Primary School, with four classes in each year group. The school occupies two sites, one in Derryvolgie Avenue and the other in Windsor Avenue. A particular feature of the school is the strong bond with St. Brigid's Parish which helps the school fulfil its Vision & Mission Statement "Attainment for all, within a happy, safe, caring Catholic Environment".

The school has a strong reputation for excellent academic achievement, in addition to supporting children with additional learning needs, including newcomer children for whom English is not their first language. The Education Training Inspectorate recently reported "The children attain high standards in literacy and numeracy...producing an extensive range of writing that is of a very high quality...and they are confident and competent in using their mathematical knowledge and thinking skills when attempting unfamiliar problems and investigation".

Sport and music feature highly among the achievements of our children and there are strong links with St. Brigid's GAC and the Belfast School of Music. There is also a variety of enrichment activities provided for children after school throughout the year.

Further information is available on the school website at: www.stbridesps.org.uk

“A particular feature of the school is the strong bond with St. Brigid's Parish which helps the school fulfil its Vision & Mission Statement “Attainment for all, within a happy, safe, caring Catholic Environment””





www.stbrigidsparishbelfast.org

October 2018