

JUNE 2026

St Philip and St James
Holywood Parish Church

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St Philip and St James
Holywood Parish Church

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VICAR'S GLEBEWARDEN
Colin Maxwell

PEOPLE'S CHURCH WARDEN
Rosie Baillie

HON TREASURER
David Clements

PEOPLE'S GLEBEWARDEN
Leslie Allen

MAGAZINE

The magazine is created by volunteers from the Parish. Please send content to **editor@holywoodparishchurch.co.uk**

Please contact the office for information about advertising, content or subscriptions. Subscription: £1/issue or £10/year.



The Vicar Writes

Some recent realisations brought to mind my advancing years!

The community council ran a successful tea dance in the parish centre on May Day. It was advertised for the over 55s. I now qualify.

I am also at that stage of life where I comment on 'the stretch in the evenings', the kind of phrase which raises a smile from young people - but I pray you are enjoying the lighter evenings, spending time in the garden and outside.

While I am normally a reasonably early adopter when it comes to technology, I only recently downloaded and began to use the Merlin App. In the unlikely event that it is unsafe, please do not risk downloading it if you are unsure, but it really is very clever. It listens to birdsong around you and tells you what it thinks it hears. There have been a few interesting species in earshot around the vicarage garden and it has added to my interest in birds.

We know stories from scripture like that of Samuel when the young proto-prophet responded to God's call (1 Samuel 3) or when God instructed Isaiah to share his message to people who may not be paying attention (Isaiah 6:9-10).

In the New Testament Jesus commends those who have ears and hear (Matthew 13) and the well known passage in Revelation 3 where Jesus pictures himself knocking on a door seeking to be admitted.

God speaks to us in so many ways - through creation, his word, his Son, his Spirit. Let us seek time away from distractions and prayerfully focus in on what he is saying to us, as individuals and as a church - that we can hear and put into practice his will.

If you have any prayerful or practical needs with which we can help, please get in touch with me directly or through the parish office.

Yours in Christ,
Gareth

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Notes from the magazine team

Dear readers,

Isn't is feeling like a proper summer now? I really admire successful gardeners, of whom there are many in the parish - the Archers, who hosted an open garden in April, Jean Govan who has the most spectacular domestic garden I've ever seen, not to mention Billy Lee, Jackie Mitchell and the church grounds volunteers, led by Noel Henderson. Despite being surrounded by role models, my gardening abilities continue to be mediocre at best. The great thing about this time of year is that nature takes over! On returning from a work trip this week, I found that the thorny, barren branches I'd left were suddenly covered in roses - welcoming me home with the most beautiful sight and smells.

Continuing the theme of treats for the senses, and moving to sound, this month we have updates from both the choir and choristers. Tastebuds were treated during the recent Christian Aid fundraising event, on which we have an update, and during May Day for anyone visiting the Mothers' Union stall before they sold out. Yet again, I was too late but I can read all about it in their update. And there are yet more opportunities to enjoy good smells and tastes with the next Welcome Lunch, and continued Wednesday Lunches - details in the following pages. And the men's social group was treated to the feeling of satisfyingly exercised muscles as they explored the Mournes. Thank you for the photos so we can enjoy the view without the effort!

As ever, there is plenty in this issue to engage the eyes - thank you to everyone who sent in content, particularly the photographs that bring the stories to life. We have another international issue hearing from local voices, as well as stories from Deli (Asha update) and South Sudan (CMSI). Many parishoners also had the opportunity to travel the length and breadth of Europe, while only physically going as far as Cresent Arts Centre in Belfast - see my article on Susan Bennett for more explanation!

As usual, there are numerous opportunities to get involved in Parish life, many of which are mentioned throughout the magazine. From sharing your photos and stories (In Conversation With, At the Church Doors, or with a stand alone article), joining one of the parish groups (Mothers' Union, Men's Society, the choir, choristers and many others) or volunteering your time (sound desk, children's ministry, grounds team and many other ways), there is a place for you in the Parish and we'd love to hear from you.

Sally



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Royal Academy of Dance Syllabus

May Day in Holywood

I am very thankful to everyone who looked after the stands on High Street and the tours of the parish church on May Day.

I saw an estimate that some 15,000 people visited the town for the festivities and we had the privilege of engaging with many of them, from senior politicians to babies in arms.

Thanksgiving is very relevant because we asked people to tell us things for which they were grateful. This simple exercise garnered some great responses.
One passing parishioner shared that they go on grateful walks. I love the positivity of that - they go out looking out for things for which to be grateful. That is a very healthy attitude and I recommend it to you.
It may seem a long way away but we are already making some plans for May Day 2027.

Gareth



Congratulations to the May Queen and King - Taylor Brown and Daniel Greer (photo credit Avril Greer)



Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Condolences
Mothers' Union members were greatly saddened by the death of Marjorie McCormick. Marjorie often joined us on MU outings and will be missed by all who knew her. We extend our deepest sympathy to Andrew, Catherine and Heather and the wider family circle.

May Day
This year once again, the Mothers' Union May Day stall proved very popular and sold out quickly. We had a wonderful array of baked goods and marmalade, which made £350. This, with a further £650 we received in donations, gave us a grand total of £1000. Thank you to all our members and the wider church family for such great generosity, which means we can make a substantial donation to the Mothers' Union Overseas Fund. It also allows us to contribute towards work in our own diocese with the prison outreach program and the AFIA (Away From It All) scheme.





Monthly meeting
Having sampled a little of the world of market trading with our stall on May Day, we were delighted to have a very experienced market trader as our speaker on 6th May.

Mr Clive O'Neill, who has been involved in the fruit and vegetable business for over fifty years, proved a very entertaining presenter as he told us of his association with Newtownards market: how it began, how it developed and how it responded to various challenges over the years.

As market manager for sixteen years Clive had much to share and his love of the market and the market community became very clear as we listened to his anecdotes and tales of market life. His pride in the market, which he described as 'run by the traders for the traders' was clear. He and his fellow traders formed the Newtownards Saturday Market Co-Operative Limited, making it the only market in Northern Ireland not to be council-run. In Newtownards the market represents a community working together for the good of their town.

Clive also shared some personal experiences, particularly his joy at receiving an MBE from the Princess Royal. He introduced us to Clive the family man, Clive the fisherman and Clive the poet. His zest for life, sense of fun and commitment to the people of Newtownards made it easy for us to understand why, for him, the Saturday market is a party every Saturday.

Spring Outing
On 13th May, Mothers' Union members had their own 'party' when we attended Belfast Operatic Company's production of 'Guys and Dolls' in the Grand Opera House, Belfast. This was our last get-together before the summer break and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Barbara

Men's Society

We had our Annual General Meeting chaired by Canon Raymond Fox. Reports were given by Chairman Secretary and Treasurer, all of which were accepted with applause, cheering, and stamping of feet.

We then welcomed Mr Cameron Stewart M.D. of Mirabilis Health Company to enlighten us about the use and mis-use of Psilocybin - in laymen's terms, Magic Mushrooms - under medicinal test conditions. Cameron gave us a lengthy talk on worldwide results on particular groups of people.

His talk was very informative and interesting. It was followed by questions, especially from those members from the world of medicine. All in all, a great evening to finish our year.

Our next meeting will be the Annual BBQ in August (date to follow).

Robert Bussell, Hon Secretary.
robertbussell@me.com 07710762323

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JUST DESSERTS FOR christian aid

In the middle of May, we once again savoured the delights of a special fundraiser for Christian Aid. I was so disappointed that, due to health reasons, I was unable to attend.

I wondered at one stage if the event could go ahead, but I needn't have worried because a lovely team of ladies cheerfully stepped up to the mark and the whole event ran like clockwork.

I extend my sincere thanks to all who brought beautiful desserts, served or cleared up – a great team.

The good news is that to date we have raised **£2017.77**, and this will be added to by approx. **£285 via gift aid**. This is a fantastic total. Folk have been very generous in donating this money to such a worthy cause.

There is more news – I am delighted to share that Barbara Harper is willing to take over the role of Christian Aid Rep in our church. Having helped greatly this year, I know that she will be a great organiser and I am glad to be leaving this role in her hands.

Rosemary Maxwell















Thomas Murray - An Appreciation

A note from the vicar



As mentioned in last month's magazine, Thomas' institution to the parishes of Castledawson and Ballyscullion takes place on the 23rd June with a service in Christ Church, Castledawson at 7.30pm. You are welcome to attend but will need to get there very early!

As we look back on Thomas' short time in the parish, I am grateful for his ministry among us. I have known Thomas since his teenage years and have been encouraged to see his vocation unfold both as a doctor and in ordained ministry.

It is hard to sum someone up in one word but I think the word 'clarity' may be close to the mark. Thomas clearly knows what he believes and is able to communicate it. Whether you have heard him share in services or spoken to him one to one you will be aware that he studies and reflects deeply, has a passion for the gospel and wants to share its hope. And in doing so he does not need to rely on a PA system! We welcome this clarity on all levels and pray that it bears fruit for God's kingdom as Thomas takes up the reins in his new parish.

Thomas will be sharing a word of farewell at morning services on Sunday 21st June - please try and come along. Those who regularly attend the 11.30am service are encouraged to join us in the parish centre around 11.00am.

Please pass on your prayerful best wishes to Thomas, Jodie and the children as they make this significant move. They will be in a new parish, a new community, new home and new schools. May God bless them all in this new beginning.



Summer Madness 2026

Life begins at 40 … That's an old cliché but as Summer Madness prepares to enter its 40th year we know that for many young people spiritual life began at Summer Madness.

The festival gathers again this year (26th-30th June) at its current home base in the grounds of the monastery at Portglenone. The theme is 'Rooted: Grow Deeper, Live Stronger'

This year's festival also marks the retirement of John Kee who has been a constant since the inception of Summer Madness. The board is already seeking to appoint someone to this position of Chief Officer. Please pray for the right person to head up and take this ministry forward.

Pray also for Lorcan, the leadership team, and the young people attending. There is still time to book a place with our group.

ashaactivities

In April Dr Kiran made us aware of the struggles the elderly face in slum communities. Thanks to the continued generosity of our parishioners we had funds available and so we transferred £3500 to Asha to help provide geriatric health clinics who will provide treatment for the elderly. Of course poverty and ill health affects all ages. Last week Dr Kiran shared a story which is typical of hundreds of women in the slums.

Mehgabeen is 39. She lives in a small rented room in Seelampur slum with her four children. Seven years ago she left her husband after years of violence and addiction. Since then she has cared for her family alone. She earns £45 a month by peeling copper wires. This is a tiring job. She works from morning until late evening. After paying her rent very little remains for food. She feeds her children first and survives on leftovers and sometimes goes without food, but she keeps going because her children are completely dependent on her. Sadly, her children have faced health problems. Her eldest daughter had to leave school after repeated seizures. Her son has tuberculosis and her seven-year-old son is battling brain and liver problems.

Thankfully, Asha is now aware of the situation and are providing a hearty meal for the family every day, helping with health care and surrounding them with love. Sadly, many others are in similar situations so for Asha the needs of communities continue to grow.

Please pray for all in difficult situations and for Asha staff and volunteers as they continue to bring hope to the slum dwellers.

Hazel



Date for your diary
Friday 23rd October

Asha fundraiser
with Festival Brass



Holywood Choristers





It's been a very busy term for Choristers! Their annual concert on 13th May gave them an opportunity to showcase their talents before an appreciative audience of family and friends, and a few days later they enjoyed letting off steam at Laser Tag in Bangor. On Sunday 17th May we enjoyed listening to them as they provided the music for Evening Prayer.

We are blessed to have such a dedicated team of young people who share their love of music with us.





Choristers begin again in September and membership is open to boys and girls aged 8 to 15.

For details, please speak to Edwin.



Susan Bennett – the author

'The Bennetts' will be a very familiar name for anyone who was part of the parish in the noughties. Chris 'Chrisby' Bennett was the ever enthusiastic Parish curate at the time. Susan, by his side, fostered fellowship and friendship, and made sure we made it all back from Summer Madness each year in one piece! The legacy of their time in Holywood includes establishing friendship groups within the parish that remain today, as well as with the Bennetts, lasting long after they moved to new churches. Susan has been invited back to Holywood to present to the Mothers' Union in recent years and regularly appears on BBC Ulster's *Thought for the Day*, which many parishioners tune in to hear.

These friendships resulted in an unofficial parish trip to the Cresent Arts Centre on 6th May when, after years of work, Susan launched her book, 'One Year', a travel memoir about the year the Bennetts went travelling following their step back from Chris's role as Chaplain to the Titanic Quarter.

Surrounded by friends from throughout the parish, speeches were made, toasts were had, the book was launched … then promptly *sold out*! Her publisher, Gill Books, her agent and No Alibis book shop (who were selling the book on the night) all said they'd never experienced a launch like it. I've since heard that it's sold out at a secondary launch in The Secret Bookshelf in Carrickfergus, as well as Waterstones in both Belfast and Lisburn.

But worry not! If you're interested to see what the fuss is about and read what Susan and Chris got up to after (and during) Parish, keep an eye out at Oscar and Joy who will be hosting Susan for a book signing in early summer.



Not only will the book be personally touching for many of us who know and love the Bennetts, it's a beautifully writen, life-affirming true story of stopping in order to start again and an inspirational memoir about rediscovering a capacity for joy and hope in the most difficult of circumstances.

Congratulations, Susan, and thank you for the gift of your story.

'One Year' is available to buy at all good bookshops or as an e-book

Photo credits: Jeremy Kinnen

The Church of Ireland GAZETTE

Reflections and highlights from the Church of Ireland's monthly magazine, by Betty McLaughlin

Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross retires

A packed St Fin Barre's Cathedral rang to the rafters with song on 18th April 2026 at the farewell service for Bishop Colton on the occasion of his retirement. He held the role for just over 27 years, a term which saw him become the longest-serving bishop in the history of the Anglican Church in Britain and Ireland. The celebration was full to capacity with well-wishers and local luminaries, as well as representatives from all parishes, chaplaincies, schools, charities, and organisations in the diocese, family and friends of Bishop Colton, and many guests from the Church at home and abroad. In tribute to the outgoing bishop's commitment to ecumenism and public engagement, the service was attended by the Lord Mayor of Cork and by the Mayor of Cork County, as well as religious figures from around the island of Ireland, Britain, Scandinavia, and Sierra Leone, amongst others.

New book seeks to resource conversations on marriage and relationships

'Faith traditions have always had things to say about marriage and relationships,' says the author of a new book which seeks to provide an overview of the subject. *Marriage and Relationships: An Anglican Exploration* by the former Bishop of Limerick and Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, the Right Reverend Kenneth Kearon, was recently launched in the Henry Roe Room of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. The book, officially launched by the Archbishop of Dublin, the Most Reverend Dr Michael Jackson, looks at societal changes in the 20th and 21st centuries which have challenged many Christians to rethink approaches to marriage and personal relationships. The Archbishop said that the Rt Revd Kearon's broad-ranging experience across the Anglican Communion left him well placed to take on 'one of the thorniest and most fractious theological topics of pastoral and personal import for exploration.'

Marriage and Relationships: An Anglican Exploration is published by Hinds Publishing and is available to buy from the bookstore of the Church of Ireland website: churchofireland.org

Where stones still breathe: the Glebe Warden's calling in a changing climate

Glebe Wardens carry one of the quietest and most demanding responsibilities in the life of the Church of Ireland. They are the custodians of buildings that have stood for centuries - buildings that have sheltered prayer, grief, celebration, and community life across generations. Many of these churches were built long before modern construction methods existed, long before airtightness tests, insulation standards, or energy ratings were imagined. Their stones were shaped in a world that understood buildings differently, and their survival depends on our willingness to understand them on their own terms.

For Glebe Wardens, the challenge is not simply to maintain a structure, but to interpret it. Medieval and early-modern churches behave in ways that are unfamiliar to those accustomed to modern buildings. Their walls breathe. Lime mortar absorbs and releases moisture, timber structures move with the seasons, ventilation is passive and instinctive rather than mechanical. They rely on permeability, not resistance. When these natural systems are disrupted by sealing windows, blocking chimneys, adding impermeable materials or introducing insulation without understanding moisture behaviour, the building begins to suffer. Mould appears, timber softens, stone salts migrate. Problems that never existed for centuries suddenly emerge.

This is why Glebe Wardens are so important. They are the first to notice when something is not right: a patch of damp that was not there before, a musty smell in the vestry, a change in the way the building feels after a well-intentioned upgrade. They are the ones who understand that a medieval church cannot be treated like a modern house. They know that breathability matters, that ventilation is not a luxury, and that the building's stability depends on respecting the physics that shaped it. The pressures facing Glebe Wardens today are greater than ever.

The decarbonisation agenda has created expectations that all buildings should be insulated, sealed, and upgraded to modern standards. Insurance requirements are becoming more demanding: fire safety obligations are increasing and funding bodies often require evidence of energy improvements. Yet medieval churches cannot simply be retrofitted into compliance. Their survival depends on avoiding the interventions that modern policy assumes are universally beneficial. The task of a Glebe Warden is therefore both practical and pastoral. It is practical because it involves maintenance, inspection, record-keeping, and decision-making.
It is pastoral because it involves caring for a building that has carried the faith of a community across generations. It is a form of stewardship that connects the present with the past and future. It is a ministry of continuity, humility, and attentiveness.

Glebe Wardens do not simply look after buildings. They look after inheritance. They look after memory. They look after the quiet, enduring presence of the Church in the landscape of Ireland. Their work is unseen, but its impact is immeasurable. The buildings they protect will stand long after all of us have gone, bearing witness to the faithfulness of those who cared for them with understanding, patience, and love.

(Extracts from article written by Mr Peter McCartney, a Trustee, Co-opted Board Member, and Glebe Warden of Down Cathedral.)

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Holywood Parish Choir on Tour

Saturday 25th April was a beautiful, sunny day and well suited for the choir of St Philip & St James's trip to Londonderry to sing Choral Evensong in the stunning and historic St Columb's Cathedral inside the City Walls.

We boarded our coach in our Parish grounds at 10am and were off. Arriving shortly before midday, we enjoyed a range of activities - walking the City walls, viewing the Derry Girls mural, pausing in coffee shops and retail outlets.



We met up at the Cathedral for a rehearsal at 2pm. Edwin had chosen fantastic music - 'Magnificat and Nunc Dimitis' by Stanford in Bb, 'Save us O Lord' by Bairstow. Ayleward, and responses and part of Psalm 119 (thankfully not all 176 verses).

The rehearsal went well and the actual service started at 4pm.

We were very grateful to the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Reverend Andrew Forster (known to many Holywood parishioners) for conducting the service. The sermon was particularly poignant as he focused on the theme of legacy and drew many examples of Christian discipleship and encouragement from his time as a member of St Philip & St James' and especially as a member of the choir. We were also delighted that our own vicar, Gareth, made the journey and participated in the service.

It was a truly uplifting experience and all offered up in the praise of our great God.

After the service and the obligatory photos, we were picked up by our coach and we enjoyed a collective meal at the City Hotel with lovely views over the River Foyle and the Peace Bridge.



As a choir community we were thinking of those members who were unable to be with us due to illness, and also of Drew who, for some reason, had opted for Venice that weekend!

We arrived back at Holywood Parish at 10pm with just time for a little sleep before resuming our normal, but equally enjoyable, role of singing at morning and evening services the following day

David Clements





PrayerLine



We have a group of intercessors which faithfully prays (in confidence) for issues brought to them. If you would like them to pray for you please contact the clergy or the parish office.

Updates to prayer requests are particularly welcome too.



Wednesday lunches

3rd and 17th June, 12:30pm
in the Parish Centre

Please contact the office to book your place

Maridi

Andrew and Joanne Quill (see more below) have recently told us that Maridi Diocese was targeted by thieves.

Local news sources reported that on Thursday 7th May armed robbers broke into the Finance Department of St John Cathedral in Maridi Diocese and made away with an unspecified sum of money. The money included collections from church schools, the church clinic, and other church-related funds.

The same source also reported the recent theft of a considerable amount of money from Chaima Christian Institute. This has caused fear and alarm among Christian organisations.

We need to pray for people and projects affected but also for justice to be served.



Andrew and Joanne Quill

Having shared their story with us, Andrew and Joanne have been speaking in other churches in the diocese and beyond. They have visited Dollingstown, Cregagh and Bangor Abbey. Please pray for encouragement for them as they travel across Ireland to build up their support here.

They also ask us to pray for Canon Emanuel who is deputising for much of their work while they are here at home. They particularly ask for prayer as he travels and leads the CHE ministry.

Men's Walking Trip in the Mournes

On 23rd May, the Men's social group, organised by Will Keown, Marc Ballard and Jonny Hooper headed off for another event. Some of the recent events have been rather relaxed affairs - pizza at Marc's house, simulator golf at Holywood Golf Club - this was more of a physical challenge as the group returned to the Mournes!

This is not a formal society, just a group of guys and an excuse to socialise. Anyone who is interested in joining the next event, please speak to Marc, Will, Jonny or Gareth.



Photo credit: Sahil Singh







Photo credit (3 images): Will Keown

Storehouse North Down

As usual, the Storehouse trolley is available at the back of church.

Please consider picking up some extra items when doing your own shopping to add to the trolly.

Cut out and keep this list for your next 'big shop'.



- Cleaning items
- Tinned veg
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Conditioner
- Toothpaste (for adults)
- Tinned meat
- Cleaning spray
- Razors
- Noodles
- Soap

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WELCOME LUNCH

SUNDAY 14TH JUNE
1.00PM PARISH CENTRE

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Please let us know any food allergies or intolerances



down to earth

From the registers



Bereavements

23rd April 2026 Billy Davidson

9th May 2026 Marjorie McCormick

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8: 38-39

VOLUNTEERING IN THE PARISH

Sunday Morning Tea and Coffee

Can you help us by preparing tea and coffee or assisting with clear up afterwards? Just let us know in the office.

Sound and Visuals

If you would like to be trained in operating the church's AV setup - please speak to Simon or visit the folks at the desk some Sunday.

Pre-school Praise

PSP needs helpers to support their work with toddlers and families. If you don't mind getting your hands covered in paint please speak to Bridget or Emily.

Have something you want to share in the magazine? A photo, story, report, poem or upcoming event? Send it to **editor@holywoodparishchurch.co.uk**

Is there someone you're willing to write about for an 'In Conversation with...'?



June 2026

Sunday 7th June
The First Sunday after Trinity

8.00am	Holy Communion Form 1
9.45pm	Holy Communion at Morning Worship
11.30am	Holy Communion Form 2
5.30pm	Choral Evensong
7.00pm	Evening Worship

Sunday 14th June
The Second Sunday after Trinity

8.00am	Holy Communion Form 1
9.45am	Morning Worship
11.30am	Morning Prayer
5.30pm	Compline
7.00pm	Evening Worship

Sunday 21st June
The Third Sunday after Trinity

8.00am	Holy Communion Form 1
9.45am	Morning Worship
11.30am	Morning Prayer
5.30pm	Compline
7.00pm	Evening Worship

Sunday 28th June
The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

8.00am	Holy Communion Form 1
9.45am	Morning Worship
11.30am	Morning Prayer
5.30pm	Holy Communion Form 1
7.00pm	Evening Worship Holy Communion

Weekday Communion service every Wednesday at 10.30am

MORE ONLINE

SIGN UP FOR DIGITAL UPDATES