



Dear Parishioner

Since arriving last January to the Parish, people have been very patiently 'waiting' to see what the new guy is going to do next. Within all the busyness of a thriving Parish, are 2 things that are most important to me; firstly that I spend time getting to know people, and I realise with a congregation of 270 families this will take longer than I thought; secondly, to pastor and teach many of you so that you know how much God loves you and desires to walk with you in your daily life. We are seeing growth spiritually and numerically, and I believe the road ahead will be very exciting, if we remain focused on God.

In the last half year, I have been working alongside a small group of parishioners, from Christ Church and St John's to discern the direction and will of God for our United Parish. God desires that we wait on him to hear his voice and not our own. He has directed me to a series of values that I believe will underpin everything we do as a Parish in the future. The document attached will provide you further details on these 6 values which were presented to the congregation on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> April – **Christ at the centre, the desire to pastor those in need, for each of us to go deeper in our relationship with God, a recognition that we must invest in and shape a new generation of young families and children, that we should continually reach out into our community to share God's love with them, and finally that we recognise the benefits in partnering with other organisations in God's mission.**

This future vision has received full support from the Select Vestry, and Bishop Alan Abernethy. There are however key enablers to making this vision a reality. One such enabler is to gather for our week of prayer in which we seek God's voice for our service to him. Without prayer and worship, we will never truly grow. Another enabler is the renovation of the kitchens and disabled toilets in Christ Church Halls. This will provide more opportunity for mission and outreach in Ballynure.

There is one specific enabler that I want to highlight which will relieve the current pressure on myself. At present I am providing the pastoral care for approximately 500 parishioners, managing 2 churches, and ensuring under God's direction that we reach out into our community with the hope that only God provides. Whilst all of this is so important and actually crucial for a healthy church, it is not sustainable with one member of staff. Therefore, the Select Vestry have agreed to consider providing an additional Associate role with specific responsibility for Families, Youth and Children across both churches.

You may also be aware that St John's were bequeathed money approximately 5 years ago, now known as the Phillips Fund. It is envisaged that this fund should now be used as a deposit on a house for the new Associate.

After a thorough assessment - the costs of salary, National Insurance, Pension, Mortgage payments, etc amount to £37,000 per annum. Whilst members of the Select Vestry have investigated receiving funding from external bodies, none of this funding is sustainable – i.e. we may only receive it for a year, and so if it stops how do we communicate to that person and to the parish, that the ministries we are developing cannot continue? Therefore I believe that funding this role for the long term must be supported through the gifts of God's people. To provide a rough guide for giving, we could achieve this total if 50 givers gave £50 extra per month. But I don't want to influence your consideration of this. Maybe you can afford more than this or maybe your current circumstances will find it difficult. All I want to do is to plant in you the potential for our future.

And so in order that God's Spirit works in each of us, you will also see attached a pledge card, which gives each of us the opportunity to prayerfully consider how we would like to respond financially to the overall vision that God has guided us to. On it you have the opportunity to allow Gift Aid to be claimed back if you are in employment. It costs you nothing to tick this box, and in turn the Government gives us back 25p on every pound you donate. The pledge form does not commit your bank account. It is simply for information so we can assess if we have reached the amount required. The intention is to make contact with you to set payments from September. Your information will only be handled by the Honorary Treasurer and completely confidential. Please complete the pledge form and return by Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May, addressing it to the Honorary Treasurer, The United Parish, St John's Church of Ireland, 3 Doagh Road, Ballyclare, BT39 9BG.

Should you have any questions regarding the Parish Vision, or you would like a visit to explain more about the Vision, please do not hesitate to contact me on 07808 479649.

May God bless you as we all discern our response to his Vision for our Parish.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonny". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Revd Jonny Campbell-Smyth  
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