

MULLAVILLY NEWS

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“Taste and See that the Lord is Good”

Psalm 34:8

it was suggested to me that, rather than sing “All is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin”, we should be singing “Some is nearly gathered in, whilst the summer storms continue”! Of course, the words don't quite the music, even if they are nearer to the truth. Traditionally, the harvest celebration, dating right back into the early Old Testament, has not been an optional extra added on in the good years. It has been part of the annual calendar of worship no matter what has happened in the preceding year. It may be incredibly difficult to accept or believe, but even in the darkness of times, God is good.

These three little monosyllabic words can seem so trite and meaningless, yet they contain a vast truth which has carried multitudes of struggling people through the deepest of troubles. The psalmist David had to deal with many issues through his varied career from shepherd boy to King, and believed that God was good, even through the harder times (yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death). In psalm 34, he is praising God for bringing him through a trial and his words urge others to taste and see that the Lord is good. This is not an advertising slogan which suggests that you can try “God” and see if you like what you find. It is a statement of fact – taste and see that the Lord **is** good. Nor is it a matter of personal taste, like trying liver and onions or chilli con carne. Tasting something is about commitment – you have to put it in your mouth, you have to bite into the orange before you can truly taste it. With a bitter orange, you might want to spit it out again, but when you taste God, you know that he is good.

Despite the attempts by people throughout history to use God for their own selfish and even savage aims, to blame God for many of the outrages of human behaviour, the goodness of God still motivates us in acts of love and care and still inspires in us a desire to gather annually at this season to give thanks for every breath that we enjoy.

HARVEST THANKSGIVINGS

Friday 10th 8pm: the Revd Shane Forster

Sunday 12th 11am: the Revd Malcolm Kingston

Sunday 12th 7pm: Peter Ferguson (to be confirmed, otherwise, the rector!)

STRIVING TO IMPROVE OUR FAMILY WORSHIP

For 15 years, our approach to family worship has remained constant, despite changing circumstances and constantly changing children and young families. The time has come to review how we accommodate our children and families in church and Sunday School, taking into account our Child Protection Policy (Safeguarding Trust) and the exceptionally poor numbers of parishioners who are willing to volunteer their time. Both of these issues severely limit what your church is able to do.

In order to help us explore the issues further, there are a few pilot things starting soon. The purpose of these projects is to ensure that parents and children find it easy to attend worship and that worship is attractive and meaningful to everyone involved.

CRECHE

Volunteers provide this facility for pre-school children for the duration of the church service. In the past, the crèche has not been available for Family Services or during holidays. We will now provisionally provide crèche on every Sunday, though older pre-school children should be able to handle the Family Service.

Parents are encouraged to use the crèche, especially when they find that they have difficulty focussing on worship and teaching. Parents are also encouraged to feel comfortable taking children out to crèche if they become unsettled.

A meeting has been arranged for Crèche volunteers on Thursday 2nd (8pm to 9pm) to review our procedures and discuss any issues that might arise. Volunteers will also be updated on "Safeguarding Trust".

A CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Children of KS1 age can find it difficult to sit through an hour of worship, though it is amazing how many do!

We hope to give the young ones an opportunity to withdraw to the Parish Centre during the middle part of worship so that they can look at the Scripture readings and apply them at their own level of understanding. They might also engage in simple worship and prayers. For example, the children might leave just before the Scripture readings and then return to accompany their parents to the communion rail. It is not a replacement for Sunday School.

This will also mean that there will be changes in our own adult worship. We will reduce the number of readings from 3 to 2 and allow an opportunity for the children to be highlighted each week before leaving.

This project will require a team of experienced and dedicated people and also the willingness of parents to encourage the children to attend. Initially, it will be only for KS1 (primary 1-3).

~~The scheme will be piloted from November 16th until Christmas.~~

HINTS AND TIPS FOR FAMILY WORSHIP

1. Encourage children to participate in singing and responses. Explain what is happening and help them to follow the words. Children engage best if they are sitting near the front and can see what is happening.
2. Don't be embarrassed about having to leave for a short while, especially if the baby is hysterical or uncomfortable in the nappy department! Don't be embarrassed to come back in again.
3. Don't make parents feel uncomfortable by glowering at them. If you feel distracted by a child, focus on giving thanks that the family is keen to attend.
4. Adults should set the example of devotional and focussed worship. Sing enthusiastically, listen attentively and don't talk during the prayers!
5. Talk afterwards about what you have learned, you might be surprised how much the child has picked up

Ten Top Tips for Adults in Worship

1: Be prepared. Try and arrive a few minutes early. Check the Scripture readings (listed in the prayer book) and think about the hymns. Spend some time in prayer. Perhaps you might bring a devotional book to read, e.g. "The Word for Today"

2: Buy your own hymn book and prayer book. You can then take time during the week to read and think about the words that are used and pencil in your own notes. The books also make great Christmas presents. Check out the new Faith Mission shop at the Magowan car-park.

3: Sit as far forward as possible. It is easier to sing and participate.

4: If you can't hear, do something about it. We have a loop system which is excellent for hearing aid users. If the microphones or speakers aren't working, tell the church-wardens immediately. The leaders cannot always tell whether their voices are amplified or not.

5: The service is usually divided into a number of sections which follow a logical sequence. Penitence, hearing the Word, a response (e.g. communion) and a dismissal or sending out. Keep this in mind and it will help you to focus.

6: Watch out for each other. Greet a few people when you come in. Help each other to find page numbers etc. and ensure everyone has a book to follow. Speak to strangers.

7: Sing! You may sound horrendous to those around you, but you're singing for God, not the X-factor panellists!

8: Stay focussed on the act of worship. Avoid unnecessary talking, follow the readings in the pew Bible, think about the words of the hymns and consider the words and themes of the prayers.

9: Don't leave unchanged. Listen for a word or phrase that challenges you and remember it during the week ahead.

10: Come back! Don't be put off if it doesn't go well. Worshipping together should be part of a regular discipline. Your presence encourages others and others can encourage you.

Our organist, Sharon McCord, has been making a major contribution to our worship for over 5 years and she will be greatly missed as she takes some time out to concentrate on her university studies. Despite searching for 6 months, we have been unable to appoint anyone as her replacement. At the very least, we need someone who is prepared to play the organ and piano at 11am each Sunday. This is a matter which requires your prayer. A parish can easily survive without a rector, but it is not so easy without an organist! Sharon will be with us until the Harvest services.

