

WELCOME



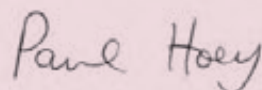
This was the title of a recent conference that caught my eye. But for many the concepts of "church" and "building" are so closely identified that they just cannot grasp how a church could leave a building.

One parish that decided to hold a Question Time in the local pub was amazed at the number of people with little or no church connection that turned up and even more by the profundity of the questions that were raised. Another parish held their Sunday morning service in the local school. Some regulars just couldn't make the leap and stayed at home. But a different group of people, many of whom had never been inside the church building, turned up, enjoyed the experience and are now beginning to find their way into belonging to that church. I'm encouraged when I hear of such experiments in "the church leaving the building".

It's not that beautiful buildings are unhelpful or unimportant; simply that when we define "church" as "building" we are beginning to miss the point.

In 2005, 3 million people tuned in to the TV programme *The Monastery* to see how five men would survive living 40 days in Worth Abbey. By the end of the series, the atheist Tony Burke, had become a believer and gave up his job producing trailers for a sex chat-line. The other four all said that they had been changed in profound ways. They all mentioned that a key factor in this change was the experience of belonging to a group of people who evidently loved God and each other.

That's the kind of transformation that can happen in any of our parishes when we stop seeing church as a building and more as a living community of faith. It's what we work and pray for in Church21.



Rev Paul Hoey
Chairman of the Parish Development
Working Group



THE JOURNEY OF A PARISH

Rev Gary Galway is rector of Drumcree parish, in the diocese of Armagh. Here he shares some of the differences Church21 is beginning to make in this parish.



What's your background and how long have you been here as rector?

I have been Rector in Drumcree for just over a year. Before going into ministry, I worked for NIE (Northern Ireland Electricity) for approximately 24 years. My training for Ordained Ministry in the Church of Ireland started in 2001. Although I found studying hard, my time in Dublin and Nottingham was a wonderful experience. I served in two curacies in Donaghadee and St Mark's Portadown.

Why did the Parish sign up for Church 21?

It came at the right time for us. We were looking for a sense of direction. We need to know who we are, what God expects of us, as well as our strengths and our weaknesses. We have defined our mission as *Showing and sharing God's love in order to transform lives. Romans 12*

We hope Church21 can help us to live it out

How has Church21 been received?

Very well! Our preparation course was well attended, with upwards of fifty people attending each night and some great discussion about our needs and opportunities as a parish. The Church 21 weekend, offered us lots of ideas and motivation. Now we've worked out where we go next in having a clearly defined vision and an action plan to make it happen.

What kind of changes have already happened in the Parish?

Some might say, Too many!

- We have installed screens and a projector for the services in church.
- We have recently started an additional All-age Worship service at 10 am.
- A worship group has been established to lead some of the services.
- We're setting up a vision team for the parish. Each

- member co-ordinates a different area of ministry – prayer – worship – mission – youth – visitation, etc.
- The Church21 parish team stepped out in faith and led the preparation course – very well too!
 - We are now into our second Alpha course for people wanting to discover more about the Christian faith and grow in their relationship with God

What are you hoping that Church 21 might add to all this?

I hope that it might help us to consolidate the new initiatives already established and help people see what we are trying to achieve and how they can play a part in it. I hope also that it will help us remember why we're doing all this – that the church may reach out to people beyond our doors, whoever they are.

What's your hope for the future? And the challenges?

That we will see God's plan for Drumcree come to fruition. It's fair to say that the image of Drumcree parish that comes to people's minds is not always the most positive. Many of our people feel hurt that they are defined by things that happened outside and beyond our control. Our prayer is that Church21 will help us be known for all the right reasons – for our worship of Jesus Christ, our service of our community, our making known God's love to all. Would I want to be anywhere else? No. I love the people here in Drumcree and I know that for many they love the Lord and because of that love, we will face the challenges ahead of us together in God's strength, through his Holy Spirit. To God be the Glory.



NARNIA COMES TO BRAY

'Through the Wardrobe' was a Narnia Exhibition put on by the Parish of Bray in the two weeks up to Easter 2009.



The Rector

Rev. Baden Stanley, explains the vision behind the project and what it means for the parish: "Our vision was to use the story of 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' to retell the Easter Story, to develop community, identify emerging leaders, and, while remaining true to the story, to enable others to celebrate the Easter message. Over a fortnight we had 4,000 visitors of all ages to the exhibition and other services and events related to it. We concluded with a dramatic Breaking of the Stone Table and a breakfast

for 200 people on Easter Sunday morning. Most adult visitors hadn't made the link between the story and Easter. Our tour guides were able to relate this out as they went around. The Easter Service in particular was very celebratory as the drama unfolded through the service. The set lent itself perfectly to a new understanding of the Resurrection. The lasting impact has been the sense of deeper community, more people getting involved and new ideas and creativity bubbling away. We have held a follow-on exhibition of photos from WW1 trenches, running at present, with people readily stepping-up to help. The benefit to the Parish has been huge - we have struggled as a parish over the years to identify a clear vision and to rediscover community. This project has changed us as a parish. It has helped us develop emerging leaders. It has opened parishioners' eyes to the possibilities of new ideas. It has helped us feel more comfortable in our Anglican shoes and it has taken us a further step towards being a truly all-age community.

CHURCH21 CONFERENCE

11 – 13 September, St Patrick's College, Dublin

A key part of the Church21 journey is the Parish Development Conference. This took place in September in Dublin and the feedback has been overwhelmingly encouraging. At the start each participant received a pedometer and was challenged to count the number of steps they took over the weekend. There were prizes for the most (over 27,000) and the least (around 13,000). What simple steps could each parish take to discover and enact God's vision?



The theme for the conference was "Vision: What It Is; How To Get It, Share It And Implement It" and the keynote speaker was Rev Ian Coffey who anchored each session while others including Bishop Ken Clarke and Bishop Ken Good also contributed.

Find out more about Church21 at www.church21.org

There was a chance for delegates to attend a series of practical workshops on the Saturday afternoon. There was a selection of seven workshops and delegates were able to attend two each.

One of the most appreciated elements of the conference was Worship. The delegates gathered in the stunningly beautiful College Chapel to share in a variety of types of service including Taize, Iona, and Wordless Worship. On the Saturday evening Wicklow Gospel Choir led a joyful Praise Celebration which received a standing ovation. The Sunday morning service of Holy Communion included an act of Blessing of the Pedometers as each participant was challenged to keep walking the path and to take those steps, even if they are small ones, that make a difference.



It was a fun-filled, action-packed conference but there was space to listen and to process all that had been heard and shared. At the end of each day there was time to relax and mingle in the student lounge. Some parishes are planning exchange visits with others as a result.

To all the delegates from the 25 participating parishes, who took the time to attend, the team of contributors, facilitators, visitors, musicians and committee members we extend a big 'Thank You'. Here are some of the participants' comments: I would like to say a big 'thank you' for the weekend you put together. It was engaging, encouraging, envisioning and a lot more besides. The whole atmosphere was wonderful, we were thoroughly spoilt, and it was very inspiring. We all went home full of enthusiasm and now we have to dissect and work out where we go from here. A blessing to my soul! Great encouragement and inspiration! Fantastic! Challenging! Long may it continue! Everyone should do this. And from a facilitator: The parish that I am facilitating this time around went away talking about how they could bring home to the rest of the parish "the buzz" they encountered at the weekend! Please visit the Church21 website to read more about the conference and to listen to recordings of some of the main talks.

Catch the Excitement!
Witness the Joy!
Shape the Vision!

CHURCH21 WEBSITE

Please visit the Church21 website to find some stories of parishes that have been through the Church21 journey, as they talk about what they have learnt and what difference it's made to them. There are some other resources and ideas that may be helpful to parishes wanting to catch a fresh vision and move forward with God's priorities for the future.



The website address is www.church21.org

CHURCH21 – PROGRAMME 3?

The stories coming back to the Church21 are sufficiently positive to encourage us to think of running a third programme, probably towards the end of 2010. It would be helpful for us to know of any parish that might have any kind of interest in being part of the programme.

If you signify your interest we'll try to keep you informed of latest developments. Just send an email to our administrator Brigid Barrett at brigid@church21.org



“ Too many church services start at eleven sharp and end at twelve dull. ”

Vance Havner

“ Most people have some sort of religion—at least they know which church they're staying away from. ”

John Erskine

“ If money is the root of all evil, why are churches always asking for it? ”

Anonymous

RESOURCES

Parishes are always asking us for helpful tools or resources. Here are five frequently used websites that could help any parish wanting to help people grow in faith and worship:

<http://www.purposedrivenlife.com>

This site has a number of free tools designed to help people clarify their call and purpose. Scores of parishes have used the "40 Days of Purpose" to great effect during Advent or Lent. Don't be put off by the cultural disjointedness of some of them. There are some excellent tools here.



<http://www.churchmaps.co.uk/stages/training.htm>

This site could be of real help to parishes seeking to develop a vision or action plan. It gives examples of material used in different dioceses that could easily be applied locally.



<http://www.altworship.org.uk/resources/visuals/>

Many commented favourably on the variety of styles of worship at the Church21 conference. For those keen to experiment with more visual and reflective styles of worship this website is a goldmine. It offers everything from practical advice to parishes wanting to use data projectors well to samples of the kind of material that could be used to good effect in most parishes.

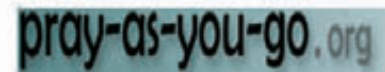


<http://www.sermonspice.org>

Sermonspice has a whole collection of themed video material that could illustrate a sermon or provide a reflective moment in worship. *Warning* – some of it is very transatlantic in its focus but there is some excellent material if you persevere in your search.

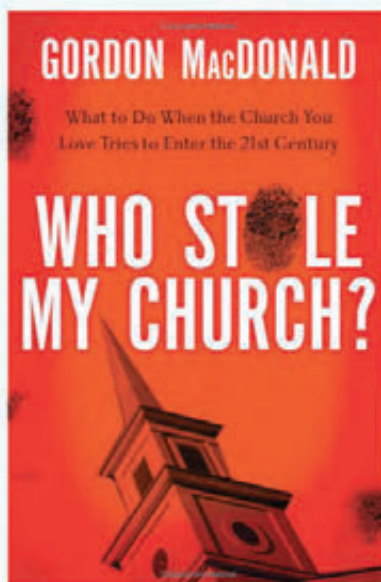
<http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/>

Many people living busy lives don't have time for a daily "quiet time" but listen to a podcast on the bus or train or as they walk to work. This site offers excellent reflections on a daily Bible reading, with some beautiful music and prayerful application.



WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND...

WHO STOLE MY CHURCH? by Gordon McDonald



We recommended this book at the Church21 conference and several parishes have come back to thank us because it has been so helpful to them in unpacking the reasons for change and how to go about it. The book reads like a novel but is based on Gordon McDonald's own experience of seeing a church through a process of change. When one member of the church asked the question, "Who stole my church?", he was prompted to bring together a group of people who felt uneasy about the changes that were being introduced. The book is a record of the discussions, thoughts and feelings they shared together. This outline, however, does not begin to do justice to the nuances found within the pages of the book. It will leave the reader at times deeply moved, at times engulfed in laughter, and, probably, with a whole different view about the kind of change that God is really looking for in his church.

But above all it creates a deep respect for people who see the church from a different viewpoint to our own. It leaves the reader feeling hopeful that it really is possible to build a church with a vision broad enough to include everyone but challenging enough to really move things forward. It's worth the price alone for the questions found at the end of each chapter; they could easily shape the content of a parish study course.