

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, DROMARA PARISH
RECTOR'S REPORT - EASTER GENERAL VESTRY
2024.

Matthew 6:10 – “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

While growing up as a child, I desired to have a good life, free of troubles as everyone would wish, but I soon realised that I live in a world where there will be trouble, but I have a God who has overcome the world with its trouble and promised to give me His peace (John 16:33). The Lord teaches us to continually pray for His Kingdom to be established, a statement Jesus made in a very popular prayer which we pray at every worship – “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done” (Matthew 6: 10). Paul the Apostle tells us more about God’s Kingdom that “the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14: 17). The Kingdom of God is the reign of God’s righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

This has been the main theme of our message to you in the year 2023. We have earnestly sought in prayer that the Kingdom of God’s righteousness will be established among us, that we will know more of God’s peace and continually be led by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the faithful teaching of God’s word.

I am very much thankful to God for his faithfulness to us as God's children and to the ministry which he has entrusted to our hands. We are thankful for ministry opportunities in the year and the experience of God's blessings on his church. The testament from the statistics of the 2023 census of the Church of Ireland carried out last month shows:

1. The average attendance in St. John's Dromara in 2023 has now increased to **77.75 people**
2. 4 young adults were confirmed in 2023, They are now involved in church ministry, helping with PowerPoint and reading at church services.
3. There were two Baptisms in 2023/2024
4. Average number of children in our Sunday School is now between 15-18 meeting every Sunday
5. Our Heroes Kids club which newly started a year ago now has between 20-25 children in attendance every week.
6. Youth fellowship has between 8-10 young people in attendance every week
7. The Senior's fellowship has between 15-18 people in attendance monthly
8. Toddlers group has continually been a blessing to the families with children in our community
9. The Mother's Union is running well and they are having meetings every month with various activities and trips planned.

10. Freezer ministry has been great, we have delivered many packs of soup to the bereaved, the sick, and the elderly within the Parishes.

Bible study has been running every week, I pray to see more people in attendance. In 2023 we had a week of mission across both Parishes and the gospel was preached, there were community and outreach events throughout the year – including, participation at John Weir's gospel mission in the Village of Dromara, coronation lunch in the hall, the annual country market, and the Christmas fair in St. John's Dromara. At the end of the year, we were treated to afternoon tea and savory organised by the trolley dollies in St. John's church hall Dromara.

So far between June 2022 and 2023, we have welcomed 14 new people to St. John's Church Dromara, I welcome and pray for – Bill, Margaret, Alison, Ruth, Tatiana, Alex, Sergei, Anya, Rosie, Rachael, Robyn, Lily, Daisy and Artie. For all these, we are thankful to God and to everyone involved in various ministries and development in the Parish. We give thanks to God for your generosity which helped in the recent refurbishment of our church hall. This year our focus of developmental work would be the church building and any other developmental project as decided by the vestry. This year we seek to reach more people with the gospel message of Jesus, we pray that people will come to faith in Jesus, we are thankful and I pray that the

seed that is sown through these various ministries will grow to enrich the Kingdom of God.

I would like to say thank you to every leader and volunteer of all ministry groups within the parish. Thanks to all Lay Readers in our Parish who have been helping me, to Colin Ferguson who plays the organ, to the choir, to the team of Sunday school leaders, to the leaders at the kid's club and youth fellowship, the Toddlers group and the Trolley Dollies. Thanks to the ladies involved with Freezer ministry. A special thanks to the outgoing vestry members. Thank you to the Rector's Churchwarden, the People's Churchwarden, the Rector's Glebe-warden, the Honorary Secretary, and the Honorary Treasurer. I want to thank every member of the congregation for all your support and kindness to our ministry.

As we look forward to electing new members of the Select vestry and trustees of this great parish, I want us to be encouraged that the presence of the Lord is with us. Therefore, let us allow the Spirit of God to guide our decision in choosing, let us refrain from allowing personal feelings to direct our choices and nomination. I pray that the Lord bless his church, and grow his Kingdom filled with His Righteousness, His peace and joy in the Holy Spirit in this new year and beyond. Amen.

Rev. George O. Okikiolu
Rector.