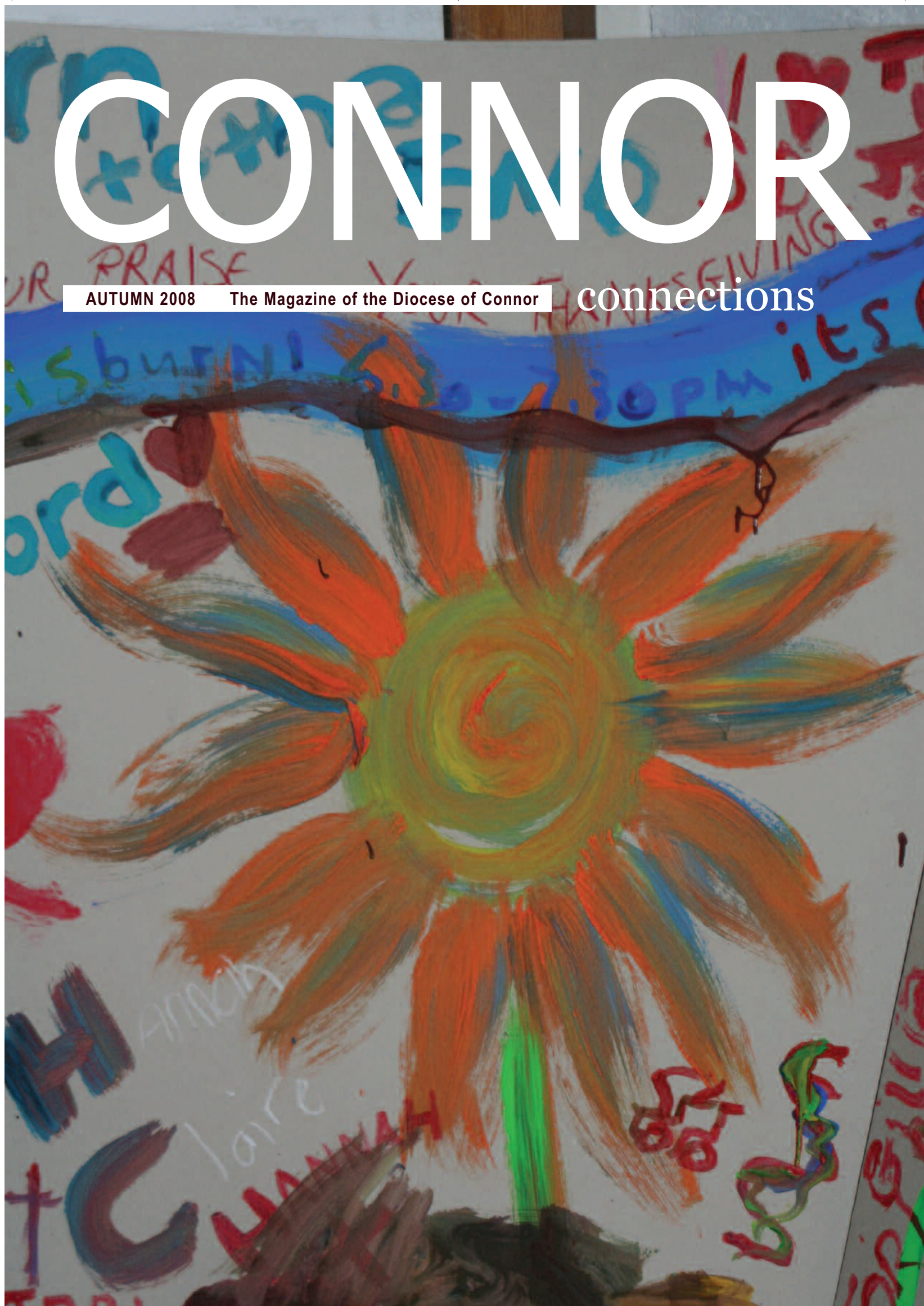


CONNOR

AUTUMN 2008

The Magazine of the Diocese of Connor

connections



	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		SYNOD



Ladies from St Brigid's who helped with catering.

Synod 2008



Bishop Alan with the Chancellor of Connor His Honour Judge Derek Rodgers.

Connor Diocesan Synod 2008 was held in St Brigid's Church, Glengormley, on June 24.

In his Presidential Address, Bishop Alan referred to the House of Bishops' Mission Statement which set out a vision for the Church. "I want to focus on three words - growth, unity and service - as I try to give a picture of a better future that will motivate us to action," the Bishop said.

All reports were approved. Archdeacon Stephen Forde, chair of Connor Council for Mission, updated Synod on the progress of the Yei School Project in southern Sudan.

Moira Thom, MU Diocesan President, and Kathleen Rodgers, vice chairman, introduced a new MU parenting programme, and explained that the MU had now seven trained parenting facilitators in Connor. The service is free.



Lay secretary Ken Gibson waits for a cup of tea!

He went on: "For too long we have almost apologised for being Church of Ireland. We have a very rich heritage of daily prayer and spirituality that we need to foster. We need to look for growth not just in terms of numbers but in quality and depth."

Miss Agnes Young, St Stephen and St Luke, highlighted the good work carried out in the community by parishes who receive support from the Priorities Fund.

The book of reports revealed that in 2007, Diocesan Council met its target of £72,800 in contributing to the Priorities Fund. The target for 2008 was £74,900.



Bishop Alan, Linda Chambers, National Director USPG, and Jan de Bruijn, at the USPG stand.

Bishop Alan said the Church needed to stop using the language of decline or despair. He added: "There may also be the need to find different ways of doing church that can engage with so many people that have disconnected from formal religion and church life."

Addressing the Report of the Down and Dromore and Connor Social Services Committee, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor and committee chairman, said the committee was planning to go into a 'form of cryogenic suspension' until it was next needed.




Bishop Alan with Martin O'Connor, education advisor, the Bishops' Appeal.

Bishop Alan said he had visited groups who are seeking to serve the needs of society. "I believe we have to increasingly become more aware of the important need to serve our communities, not just preach at them," he said.

The Archdeacon paid tribute to the work the committee has done over the years, and to those who have served on it.



The top table at Connor Diocesan Synod. From left: Honorary lay secretaries Ken Gibson and Robert Kay; Chancellor, His Honour Judge Derek Rodgers; Bishop Alan; The Dean of Connor the Very Rev John Bond; the Archdeacon of Belfast, the Ven Barry Dodds; Diocesan Secretary Neil Wilson and Diocesan Accountant David Cromie.

CONNOR CONNECTIONS	BISHOP'S MESSAGE/MISSION	

Reflections on the Lambeth Conference



Our time together has indeed demonstrated to us the breadth and richness of the Communion. It has been a privilege to be here together, to represent our dioceses and to grow in respect and affection for one another.

With the many differences among us we have found ourselves profoundly connected with one another and committed to God's mission. Many of us have experienced a real depth of fellowship in our Bible Study Groups and have been moved, sometimes to tears, by the stories our brothers and sisters have told us about the life of their churches, their communities and their own witness.

For many bishops, especially those for whom this has been their first Lambeth Conference, they have understood for the first time what a precious thing it is to be an Anglican. There has been a wonderful spirit of dialogue and we want that to continue beyond the conference by every means possible - "the indaba must go on," as one group expressed it.

For many of us have discovered more fully why we need one another and the joy of being committed to one another. At a time when many in our global society are seeking just the sort of international community that we already have, we would be foolish to let such a gift fall apart.

+Alan Connor



Pupils at Mongo School in Connor's link diocese of Yei, southern Sudan, celebrate as the first classrooms in their new school open for lessons.

Lessons underway in new Yei school

The first block in the new primary school at Mongo, Yei Diocese, southern Sudan, is built and in use by the children.

Work is well underway on the second block, with the walls and roof completed and plastering underway, and work on block three is expected to begin in October.

The school has been funded by Connor, which is linked with Yei. By August 31 this year £49,500 donated by Connor parishes and individuals had been sent to Mongo, in addition to £20,000 already raised by Agherton Parish. That means just under £70,000 of the £80,000 target has been raised and sent since the Connor Diocesan Synod in October 2007.

A progress report on the school was submitted by John Spens, CMSI mission partner in Yei, in September. Archdeacon Stephen Forde, Chair of Connor Council for Mission, said it made "very encouraging reading."

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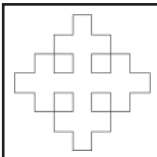
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Website: www.connor.anglican.org

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: A SECTION OF THE GRAFFITI CORNER AT THE ENERGIZE CELEBRATION OF YOUTH. SEE PAGES 4&5

IF YOU HAVE ANY EDITORIAL COMMENTS OR WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEXT EDITION OF CONNOR CONNECTIONS PLEASE CONTACT:

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CONNOR CONNECTIONS

YOUTH



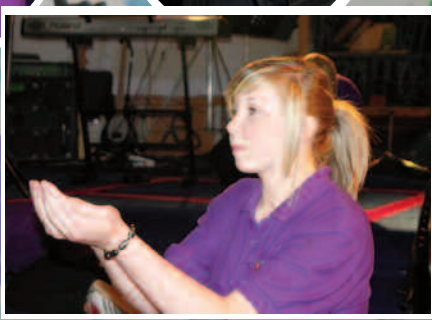
One of the greatest gifts in the life of the diocese is our young people and I want them to have the gift to experience the richness of what the diocese has to offer. You have permission - Bishop Alan



Chrysalis Dance Ministry St Paul & St Barnabas



Sharon CIYD



Hannah & Hannah



Energize training dates:
Tuesday October 21 - Parish Centre Bushmills... Monday November 3 Antrim Parish Centre... Wednesday November 12 St Thomas's, Belfast - Be there...

CONNOR CONNECTIONS		
	YOUTH	

Hundreds join the *ENERGIZE* celebration of youth in St Brigid's, Glengormley, on Sunday, September 28



Hey look - it's me! says Victoria Jackson, St John's, Ballyclare.

Ballyclare

Keith

Lisburn & Derryvolgie

St Paul & St Barnabas

Glenavy

Lisburn Cathedral

We want you to engage and hear what God is saying. We have a fantastic message to give. There are hundreds in here tonight and thousands of others out there who don't know that message - Keith Neil

	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		NEWS



At the Ordination of Priests in St James' Parish Church, Belfast, on June 9 are, from left: Alan Whyte, Dean's Verger; the Ven Stephen Ford, Archdeacon of Dalriada; the Rev Barry Forde; Dean John Bond, Dean of Connor; the Rev Campbell Dixon; the Ven Barry Dodds, Archdeacon of Belfast; the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor; the Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain; Canon Will Murphy, Director of Ordinands; the Rev John McClure; the Rev William Taggart, Registrar; the Rev Kenneth Gamble; the Rev Mark Reid; Canon Edgar Turner, Principle Registrar, and the Rev Charles McCollum rector of St James.

A Service of Ordination of Deacons took place in St Patrick's Parish Church, Ballymena, on June 15. Pictured are, from left: The Rev Canon Stuart Lloyd, rector of Ballymena; the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor; the Rev Mark Niblock, ordained Deacon for the Curacy of Agherton; the Rev William Taggart, Registrar; the Ven Stephen Forde, Archdeacon of Dalriada; the Rev Martin Hilliard, ordained Deacon for the Curacy of Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo; the Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain; the Bishop of Connor; the Ven Barry Dodds, Archdeacon of Belfast; the Rev Helen MacArthur, ordained Deacon for the Curacy of Derriagh; the Rev Paul Hewitt, preacher; the Very Rev John Bond, Dean of Connor; the Rev John Farr, ordained Deacon for the Curacy of Muckamore, Killead and Gartree, and Alan Whyte, Dean's Verger.



Rathlin wedding belle

Wedding bells rang in St Thomas's Church, Rathlin, on August 8 – for only the fourth time since 1945 - when Siobhán McFaul and René Meijer were married on the island.

Siobhán, was born and raised on Rathlin, and her parents Neil and Mary McFaul are both originally from the island. She met Dutchman René four years ago. They are now active members of All Saints' Parish, Antrim, where René is People's Churchwarden. The Curate of Antrim, the Rev David Ferguson, conducted the wedding ceremony.

Priest-in-Charge of Rathlin, the Rev Patrick Barton, who also officiated at the ceremony, said: "We are delighted that Siobhán and René have been married in St Thomas'. It is a rare and special occasion for me as Priest-in-Charge of Rathlin, for our small congregation and for all the island."



Siobhán and René with the Rev David Ferguson after their wedding in St Thomas's, Rathlin Island.

Looking at Fresh Expressions in Belfast

Two representatives of the Church Army involved in Fresh Expressions in England visited St Hilda's, Kilmakee, and Holy Trinity, Ballysillan in June.

George Lings addressed the subject of theology for a mission shaped church and for all fresh expressions of church, while Neville Willerton, National Projects Officer for Fresh Expressions, outlined a model of Fresh Expressions of Church based in Wolverhampton.


The meetings were attended by invited guests including members of clergy and others involved in ministry in south and north Belfast.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, said the initiative followed talks and meetings with different group and agencies as part of his thinking for the future of parish life in Belfast. "It is clear that many people want to find constructive and new ways of planning for the church in the next few decades," he said.

Institution of Rev Gary Millar

The Rev Gary Millar was instituted as rector of the united parishes of St Paul and St Barnabas, Belfast, on Thursday, June 26. A native of Coleraine, Gary was ordained in Llandaff Cathedral, Wales, in 1991. He was a curate in the Diocese of Llandaff over a period of six years, before he was appointed Rector of Dromara and Garvaghy, Diocese of Down and Dromore, in 1997.

Gary moved to the incumbency of Kilkeel in 2001. He is married to Gillian and the couple has four children.

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Higher than Mount Everest!

The rector of the Church of Ireland parish of Ballymena, the Rev Canon Stuart Lloyd, successfully conquered the height of Everest when he scaled Slemish Mountain 50 times.

The event was organised to raise funds for the parish's partner church of Sundar Dhoka in Nepal, and Stuart was ably supported by some of his parishioners who joined him at various stages and in turn totalled 87 ascents.



Canon Stuart Lloyd on top of the world after his fundraising climb.

St Luke's reaches out with 'Open Hands'

St Luke's Church, Lower Falls, Belfast, which closed for worship on January 1 2006, is to re-open as a centre for cross community use.

The Rev Edith Quirey, Bishop's Curate of St Stephen's (Millfield) and St Luke's, has the agreement of the Representative Church Body (RCB) of the Church of Ireland to pursue plans to bring it back into use.

Edith said: "St Luke's was such a part of the community and closure was a tough decision for the parishioners. But since then I have had time to think and pray about it and I felt God was telling me to keep St Luke's open. I

knew it would not open again as a church on a Sunday but I saw in my mind's eye how it could be used."

Edith has the backing of a committee formed of members of the select vestries from St Stephen's and St Luke's.

The new centre will be called 'The Open Hands Centre' and has been constituted as a charity. The transformation may take years and will cost more than £1m.

It is hoped the building will be used for cross community activities including an after school club, a Contact Centre for separated families, a café and office

space for local organisations.

The centre would also offer training facilities, a library, and activities for young men and women, as well as a quiet place for worship and reflection.

Edith added. "I know what it was like to grow up in the Troubles and to lose things. I lived in Lanark Street off the Springfield Road. We were put out on internment day. Mum, dad and six children put out before the house was burned to the ground.

"I had grown up with Catholic friends and never had a problem. We need to let the next generation see that we are no different to each other."



HALF A CENTURY! Betty Scroggy, pictured with her husband Tommy and the Rev Moreen Hutchinson, receives a gift of a painting of Largy Church from Churchwardens Kate Magill and William Wright. A special evening was organised to honour Betty who has been playing the organ in Largy Church for 50 years.



NEW CHAPLAINS: Bishop Alan Abernethy with the Rev Canon Kathleen Brown, newly appointed Chaplain to clergy widows, and Archdeacon Jack Patterson, newly appointed Chaplain to retired clergy.

	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		SPECIAL FEATURE

Lindsey lives on in others

Lindsey Waller, aged 17, died from head injuries when a quad bike overturned in July 2003. Her death however enabled three other people to live.

Lindsey's mother Avril, a parishioner at Holy Trinity, Woodburn, said she knew within hours of the accident that Lindsey was brain stem dead.

The teenager, who was healthy and fit, had signed up to the donor register when she was 10. Avril said: "I thought of all those lovely organs glowing with health inside her body working perfectly well. It would be awful to let them die too when someone else could use them."

The search began for organ recipients and the following evening Avril and her husband Clive saw their daughter breathing for the last time before the surgeons began to remove the potentially life saving organs.

One of Lindsey's kidneys went to a four-year-old girl, the other to a 19-year-old man and her liver to a 35-year-old woman. "The young man had had a transplant when he was nine, but it had failed and he had waited another 10 years before he got Lindsey's kidney," said Avril. "Ten years, that broke my heart."



Avril Waller with a picture of her daughter Lindsey.

Avril has been in touch with the little girl and the liver recipient by letter. "The girl is now nine and is doing really well," she said. "The other lady sent me a wonderful letter full of the joy of life. She had a husband and 10-year-old son. She would be dead now if she had not received Lindsey's liver."

Avril said she was very proud of her daughter. "I feel she is still living on in other people. That's why I would urge people to go on the register. At the time people may think they don't want their loved one's body desecrated, but over the years the peace and satisfaction you get from helping someone else to live far outweighs the bad feelings you experience at the time of death."

Stephen Wilson is alive today thanks to someone else. He received, in his own words: "The gift of life, a remarkable gift," in the form of a heart and lung transplant.

The 50-year-old from Ballymoney was diagnosed with the congenital heart disease cardiomyopathy when he was 25. In 1995 he suffered a slight stroke and in 1997, after a road accident, found himself increasingly breathless.

He and his wife Elsie were told that he may be assessed for a heart transplant.

The breathlessness was caused by fluid on the heart due to heart failure, and Stephen's condition was stabilised, but in May 2003 he collapsed in hospital after receiving physiotherapy for gout. His heart had simply stopped. His GP managed to revive him and Stephen was fitted with a defibrillator and pacemaker.



Stephen Wilson, who has had a heart and lung transplant, shares a smile with his wife

But his heart stopped on two more occasions and an assessment in the specialist heart centre in Newcastle indicated a heart transplant alone would not work. "The professor said I had three to six months to live or I could have a heart and lung transplant. Those were my options,"

Connor launches

To raise awareness of the need for organ donors, Connor Diocese has named Sunday November 30 as Organ Donor Sunday.

The Anglican Church describes organ donation as a striking example of Christian duty. Between April 1 2007 and March 31 this year, 3,235 organ transplants were carried out in the UK, thanks to 1,665 donors. Yet only 25 per cent of people have registered as organ donors.

The Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor and chaplain in Antrim Area Hospital, initiated the campaign. He said: "The Intensive Care Unit is not the time to make decisions on organ donation. A hospital bed is not the place to theologise when someone is going through numerous emotions as they deal with the death of a loved one."

"This is a conversation I would encourage families to have around the table at the end of a meal or over a cup of coffee. By distributing the organ donation leaflets, I hope many people will take the time to think about how they can help their neighbour even after death."

CONNOR CONNECTIONS	SPECIAL FEATURE	
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Stephen received a heart and lung transplant from his wife Elsie.

Stephen said.

"It was a straightforward decision, for I could feel my condition was getting worse." Elsie added: "We had just had another granddaughter and it was time to do something if he was going to see his grandchildren grow up."

Stephen had to keep his mobile on at all times. The first call came in July 2005. He was rushed to Newcastle in a private plane, but the heart was not suitable, and the lungs went to someone else. "I actually found it quite reassuring because I knew that their procedures for organ selection were very

strict," said Stephen. Another call came on August 1 2005. The organs were suitable. Stephen was six hours in theatre, during which time Elsie was kept informed by the transplant co-ordinator. "He said he did not know how Stephen had survived as long as he did because his heart was in such a bad condition. I said it was in the Lord's hands that things were happening at this time. In death shall we live. I was thinking about the person who donated their organs."

Stephen remained in Newcastle for 12 weeks. Afterwards he needed kidney dialysis for a year. He is now able to drive, swim and is putting on some of the weight he lost during and after the operation. He has suffered chronic rejection, caused by scarring, but this has been stabilised.

"I can interact and play with my grandchildren now

too, which means a lot," he said. "I am very privileged to be given this second chance, and I now live to honour the man who died that I might live."

The donor of the heart and kidney was a 38-year-old man from Scotland who died of a brain tumour. "He has given me the gift of life and it is a remarkable gift," said Stephen.

He would urge everyone to sign up for the donor register. "After you die your body just goes back to dust, so you should donate your organs to help others, and to give them a

Stephen and Elsie are Northern Ireland representatives for the mission charity World in Need, and are involved in child sponsorship work. Anyone wishing to talk to them about sponsorship or transplants can contact them on 028 2766 7077.

Organ donor initiative

Eleanor Donaghy, regional transplant co-ordinator for Northern Ireland, said: "There will always be a shortage of organ donors. As technology advances and more people are considered suitable for transplant the demand continues to rise. Again, because of technological advances, less people are dying from serious inter-cerebral events and so there are fewer donors."

Eleanor and her team identify suitable donors and recipients. Families will initially be approached about the possibility of organ donation by the consultant treating the patient. Once Eleanor's team advises them that the person is on the register most families are receptive to the process.

"The family has had the worst news in the world for them at that time and there are very few people who can do anything to make it better, but organ donation can offer a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel," she said.

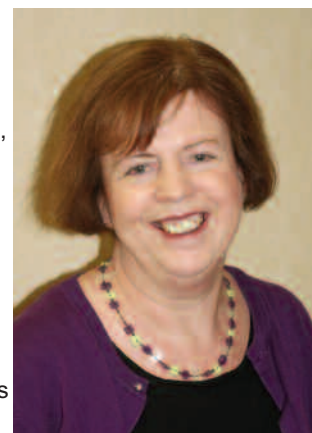
"It is something that families can cling to. They think of the deceased as someone who has helped others throughout their life and this is a way of taking away the futility of their death."

When a family agrees to donation, the transplant teams will be alerted and even before the organs are removed, the search for a suitable recipient gets underway.

Eleanor added: "It is wonderful when you bring a person in who has been waiting four or five years and you see the immediate difference a transplant can make.

"Think of the person you feel closest to in the whole world, the person you feel most protective of. If they needed a transplant would you want them to get it? Surely you should be willing to be a donor in the event of your death."

You can get further information about the transplant process or register as a donor online at www.uktransplant.org.uk. Alternatively ring freephone 0845 6060400.



Eleanor Donaghy, Northern Ireland Transplant Co-ordinator.

	CONNOR CONNECTIONS	
		LAMBETH CONFERENCE



At the Lambeth Conference. Left to right: Two spouses add colour to the proceedings; Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, head of the Anglican Church in the USA, addresses a Press Conference; Bishop Alan with friend Leon from his Bible Study group; Mrs Jane Williams, wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, amidst a sea of colour as the spouses prepare for their group picture. Insert below: A face in the crowd of Bishops during the Conference photograph.

After Lambeth Bishop's spirit 'sore yet hopeful'

At his first Lambeth Conference, the Bishop of Connor was appointed a listener and played a key role in drafting the conference report.

The Rt Rev Alan Abernethy said afterwards: "I am weary in body, numb in my thinking and with a sprit sore and yet hopeful."

The Bishop was reflecting on the once-a decade gathering of the Anglican Communion at Canterbury.

While the conference, from July 16-August 3, grappled with issues including poverty in Africa and climate change, the media focused on the controversial issue of 'sexuality' which kept many Bishops away from the conference.

As one of only 16 listeners, Bishop Alan had to be alert to each and every voice. And as he anticipated, it was not easy.

"My pastoral heart was tested to the limit as I felt the deep pain in our communion and a sense that this was not going to be fixed," he said afterwards.

The Bishop said his first impression of Lambeth was 'amazing' – "an amazing collection of humanity. The languages, the dress, the cultural nuances..."

Worship took place in the big top. "The music was delightful. The liturgy was well done but not fussy, and all participated," the Bishop said.

"The retreat [at Canterbury Cathedral] was helpful with Rowan Williams' wonderful ability to say simple things but make them sound profound."

He said the service in Canterbury Cathedral on the first Sunday was very humbling, and gave him an amazing sense of history. "The stones are almost holy. People have

prayed there for so long, and so many people have done this before. It is important to feel that sense of past before you start talking about the future," he said.

But Bishop Alan said that as the experience developed there was sameness about the worship that either said provinces were all doing it the same or there was a standard style and text set for Lambeth.

He spoke highly of the indaba method of discussion. "The indaba groups help to build up trust so people feel they can speak freely," he said.



"The nomination to be a listener for our group left me thrilled and yet aware of the enormous responsibility to be faithful to the process."


Speaking during the conference, he said: "There is a mix of those who think it is hopeless, those who are uplifted and those who want their own way."

"But the Church is paramount here. I sense a great amount of pain. People feel excluded and feel that others don't understand them."

Looking back on his experience, Bishop Alan said he felt there were too many western voices. Time revealed that the indaba process was difficult for those who wanted answers or decisions because it gave voices and conversation rather than formal resolutions and definitive conclusions.

The most affirming part of the conference was his Bible Study group, comprising "a special group of people."

The stress of finishing the document to a deadline also brought Bishop Alan under additional pressure. "The timescale almost reached breaking point, not because of disagreement but because of the pressure of the time to finish before we felt able to do so. I do pray that we have honoured the spirit of "indaba" and the Lord will guard and

CONNOR CONNECTIONS		
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Enriched by faith stories

Bishops' spouses participated in their own conference which ran alongside the main conference, and Dr Liz Abernethy, wife of the Bishop of Connor, spoke afterwards about her awe at the size and diversity of the Anglican Church worldwide.



Bishop Alan and his wife Liz with Canterbury Cathedral in the background.

She said: "I was enriched and challenged by the faith stories bishops' wives shared in Bible Study Groups, over dinner or in the bus to different activities. An issue that concerned mothers in Sudan just like here was the safety of their children. I was particularly moved by one wife and mother who couldn't let her children play alone because they might be kidnapped to fight for the guerilla forces or they may wander onto landmines. Despite hardship and heavy responsibilities these women did not complain."

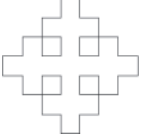
Liz said: "The challenges of hunger, poverty, justice and protecting the planet were personalised in stories of hardship in many parts of the world. I trust that remembering some of these stories will help me strive harder to make a difference."

But she said there was pain too in the confusion and hurt because of polarised attitudes on human sexuality. "I found it easier to focus on all the other issues that united us and asked for grace to respect opinions that differed from mine."

Liz thanked Connor Diocese for allowing her to share this experience with Alan. "It was a wonderful privilege," she added.



Smiles from Bishop Alan as he waits to climb onto the stand with all his fellow Bishops for the Conference photograph.

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Clergy widows invited for tea in Broughshane

More than a dozen Church of Ireland clergy widows from all parts of Connor Diocese were guests of

the Bishop of Connor in St Patrick's, Broughshane, on July 9, when they were treated to

afternoon tea in the parish hall, followed by a Service of Holy Communion in the Church.



This is the first such event for clergy widows, and was instigated by Bishop Alan Abernethy, who recently appointed the Rev Canon Kathleen Brown as Chaplain to clergy widows.

"This was a time for people who probably once had quite a lot to do with each other to come back together to chat and catch up on the news," Canon Brown said. "It was a lovely afternoon and we hope to repeat it next year."

The Bishop of Connor, Dean John Bond and Canon Kathleen Brown with some of the clergy widows. Photo courtesy of the Ballymena Times.

A time of renewal

A group of nearly 40 clergy travelled to the Ammerdown Centre near Bristol for a three day retreat.

They were accompanied by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Sister Valerie Thom of the Church Army, and Peter Hamill, Connor Training Co-ordinator. The Rev Helen Houston, Chaplain of St Rocco's Hospice, Warrington led the devotional talks.

Bishop Alan said the retreat had been "a time of refreshment, listening and renewal for all."

Inuits visit Connor



A group of Inuits visited Northern Ireland during August as guests of the parish of St Nicholas in Carrickfergus. Bishop of the Arctic, the Rt Rev Andrew Atagotaaluk, was accompanied by a group from Pangnirtung, Baffin Island, Canada. For St Nicholas's curate the Rev Darren McCartney, it was an opportunity to renew old acquaintances. Darren and his wife Karen lived in the Arctic for more than three years, where he was minister in charge of St Luke's Anglican Church. The Inuit group is pictured visiting Stormont. Photo Dermot MacGreevey.

Helping give the homeless a voice

Representatives of agencies working with the homeless met with the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy in June.

They included the Council for the Homeless, Extern Homeless Support, the Simon Community, Belfast HSCT, the Salvation Army, the Housing Executive, Shelter and SHAC Housing Association.

The Bishop heard that an average of 20,000 households presented to the Housing Executive as homeless every year, often because of breakdown of relationships or breakdown of private rented accommodation.

"If you become homeless, that brings a lot of problems. There is the stigma. In rural areas there are a lot of homeless people sleeping rough. They will not go to anyone for help because they feel it is their fault," said Ricky Rowledge from the Council for the Homeless.


Other problems include difficulty finding or keeping employment, depression, alcohol and drug abuse.

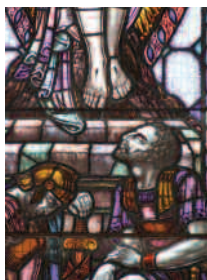
The group suggested a number of ways in which the church could help tackle the problem, including lobbying government; addressing the practicalities of alcohol abuse; providing visitors and toiletries for a homeless person in hospital and offering free crèche places in church buildings to allow homeless parents to seek work.

Bishop Alan said the meeting was part of his efforts to examine the issues in society that the church is called to serve. "We are in a post conflict era and are now dealing with very difficult social issues. I want to know how the church can be involved," he said.

"Meetings like this help ensure we work together and are able to go to the Assembly and other groups on behalf of people who cannot speak for themselves.

"I was very encouraged by the warmth of people towards church involvement in these issues. They do see the church as having a very important role in working with other groups."

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A section of the beautiful East Window in St James's

'A wonderful proud history'

After 136 years as a place of dedicated worship, St James's Church in north Belfast has closed. Numbers began to decline during the 1950s but this exodus was exacerbated by the Troubles. Closure was inevitable, but still painful.

The Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor, referred to that pain in his address at the closing service in St James's on Sunday June 29. **"There is much pain and sadness. For some there is still anger and confusion,"** he said. **"I cannot fix that pain but I have to help us all find ways of celebrating a wonderful proud history of a parish church that has brought much blessing to so many. The focus needs to lift us above the moment and find ways of thanking God and celebrating or we will fail those who have served in this parish faithfully and lovingly."**

St James's has been grouped with St Peter's since 1996, and the Rev Charles McCollum has been rector since early 1997.

Terry Pateman joined the BB in St James's when he was nine. He later became captain and when it closed down in 1975 it was the second oldest company in Ireland.

Terry recalled how numbers in the parish declined rapidly because of the Troubles. "It was a pretty grim period," he said. "People in the 35 to 50 age bracket disappeared almost overnight, and we were left with an ageing parish."

It was a far cry from the heyday of the church. "We had organisations going every night of the week, BB, Guides, Scouts, GFS, badminton, an operatic society, woman's guild, youth club and one of the oldest MU branches in Ireland," Terry said.

He added: "I was very sad to see it close. It was a lovely church to worship in. There was a great sense of feeling in it. There was so much history in it too. It was the last sandstone church built in the UK and the first ever live colour BBC TV morning service was broadcast from St James's in the late fifties."

St James's was also known for its strong tradition of liturgy and church music.

Margaret Macbeth's earliest memory of St James's was falling down the chancel steps on Gift Sunday just before her third birthday. Margaret, 76, and her sister Hazel, 74, have been members of the church all their lives.

They have many fond memories - one revolving around their brother Billy. Born with cerebral palsy, he defied doctors' prognosis and lived into his seventies. "Billy couldn't talk or sit up until he was about five, but dad taught him to whistle. Once my mother took him to evening service and leaving home Dad said: 'Now Billy, no whistling in church.' As soon as the sermon started, Billy began whistling!" Margaret recalled.

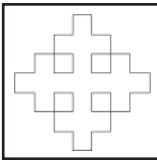
An aerial bombardment badly damaged St James's on April 15 1941. It also destroyed Margaret and Hazel's home. "We were hiding under the dining table, and thankfully no one was hurt," said Margaret, then nine. "Mother said that if we had been in our beds we would have been killed."

St James's tower, steeple and belfry survived the bombing. The church was rebuilt and the new church was consecrated on September 11 1954.

Margaret and Hazel's home was also rebuilt and the two remained loyal members of the parish. "St James's was blessed with very talented and dedicated clergy in the 30s and 40s, and the Sunday School teachers were magnificent," Margaret said.

At the time of closure Margaret, a retired school headmistress, was rector's churchwarden and Hazel, a retired accountant, was people's churchwarden.

The Antiochian Orthodox Church is now using the church and the hall for worship and outreach under licence.



Liverpool rules!



Eddie Sullivan, head community coach with Liverpool FC, chats with Sister Valerie Thom during the summer coaching at the Shankill.

For a fifth consecutive year Liverpool FC community coaches visited the Shankill in a project organised by Sister Valerie Thom of the Church Army.

The coaches, led by head coach Eddie Sullivan, were accompanied by chaplain Bill Bygroves, who led a gospel presentation at St Columba's, Whiterock.

"The project is very positive for the area and very positive for the church. It shows that the church is not just for a Sunday morning but is willing to get out into the community," said Valerie.

"This project is a chance to reach people with the gospel who would never enter a church door. They will come and listen to Bill and that is Christianity in action."

Clergy visit Zambia

The Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Vicar of Antrim and Archdeacon of Connor, the Rev David Ferguson, curate of Antrim, and the Rev Brian Stewart, rector of St George's parish, travelled to Kitwe, northern Zambia, to visit St John's Anglican seminary in June.

Stephen described the trip as 'an experience of a lifetime.' "Nothing can really prepare you for the poverty of certain areas in Zambia and yet even in the remotest and poorest of places, we encountered such genuine friendship and welcome," he said. "People who had only the barest of essentials still found time to worship God."

He went on: "We witnessed a church where financial resources are in short supply, but blessed with people who serve Almighty God with heart and mind and soul and strength.

"The things which we may be worried about in Northern Ireland are nothing compared to the obstacles the people in Zambia have to overcome. The visit certainly has made us look again at where our priorities lie in our own lives and ministries."



Greenisland teenager Hannah Gordon with some of the children in the orphanage.




Nancy Givens with an elderly lady whose home is Little Hearts.



Norman Givens said that despite a disability this 12-year-old girl 'simply shone.'



The trip allowed Peter Regan to meet up again with Gemini, a girl he sponsors.

CONNOR CONNECTIONS		
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Building relationships

Greenisland group finds no shortage of love in an orphanage in India

A group from Greenisland Parish travelled to Chennai in India to work in an orphanage and school for three weeks in August.

Many of the 23-strong group were teenagers, getting their first taste of a culture very different to their own. Nancy and Norman Givens were among eight adults in the group, and even they struggled to deal with the poverty, the stench and the pain that is India.

Despite a warm welcome the orphanage itself was a shock. Little Hearts was founded 10 years ago by Iyyappan and Rita. Most of the residents are severely disabled. The children don't have nappies and so sleep on straw. The group found the smell and the conditions difficult to deal with.

Speaking soon after their return, Nancy said: "I don't think you could ever get used to it. It has been just over a week and this is the first time I can speak without crying." Facilities may be basic, but Nancy added: "When you go into an orphanage in India, it is full of love."

The couple visited slums which are home to some of the children attending the Little Buds Dalit school. "This area was hit by the Boxing Day tsunami and people are still living in makeshift slums," said Nancy. "They never got a penny of the aid that was promised." They visited a household of three generations of women whose husbands had died "Two of the women work on a building site. They are wafer thin, they carry breezeblocks all day for £1 a day, and they are so thankful for it," said Nancy.

The slum dwellers have to pay £1 a month rent. Norman and Nancy left three months rent with every family they met. "They did not want to take the money, we had to

push it into their hands," said Nancy. "Often they would have nothing to eat, but they never cried poverty. They have such dignity."

The group attended a church service in Chennai at which a 14-year-old girl suffering from cancer sang. They left her £300 to finish her chemotherapy treatment.

They had raised £37,000 before leaving for India. The money helped pay for new wheelchairs and standing frames, new tyres on the school buses, gifts, and outings, among which was a trip to 'Dizzyland!' The fun fair was a hit with both teachers and children who had never experienced anything like it before. Nancy said: "It was so wonderful to see the delight on the children's faces."



Michael Hancock cuddles a small boy at the Little Hearts orphanage.

Among the group were two occupational therapists who worked with the more disabled children. The teenagers in the group had a variety of tasks, but their main role was to nurse and care for the children in the orphanage.

Greenisland parishioner Peter Regan, treasurer with Acts Ministries which funds the orphanage and school, said: "A lot of young people go on mission trips thinking they are going to construct something. It took a while for them to realise that what they were there to build was relationships, which will last a lot longer than anything made of bricks and mortar."

Nancy said the orphanage was a shock to the teenagers, but they quickly adapted. "Everybody broke their hearts leaving. They all cried. The love of the teenagers for the children in the state those children were in amazed me," she said.

Greenisland Parish is looking for sponsors for all the children in the orphanage. Twenty five pounds a month will provide for a child. This is a lifetime commitment and anyone wanting to help make life better for these children should contact Peter Regan on 028 9086 5025.

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