

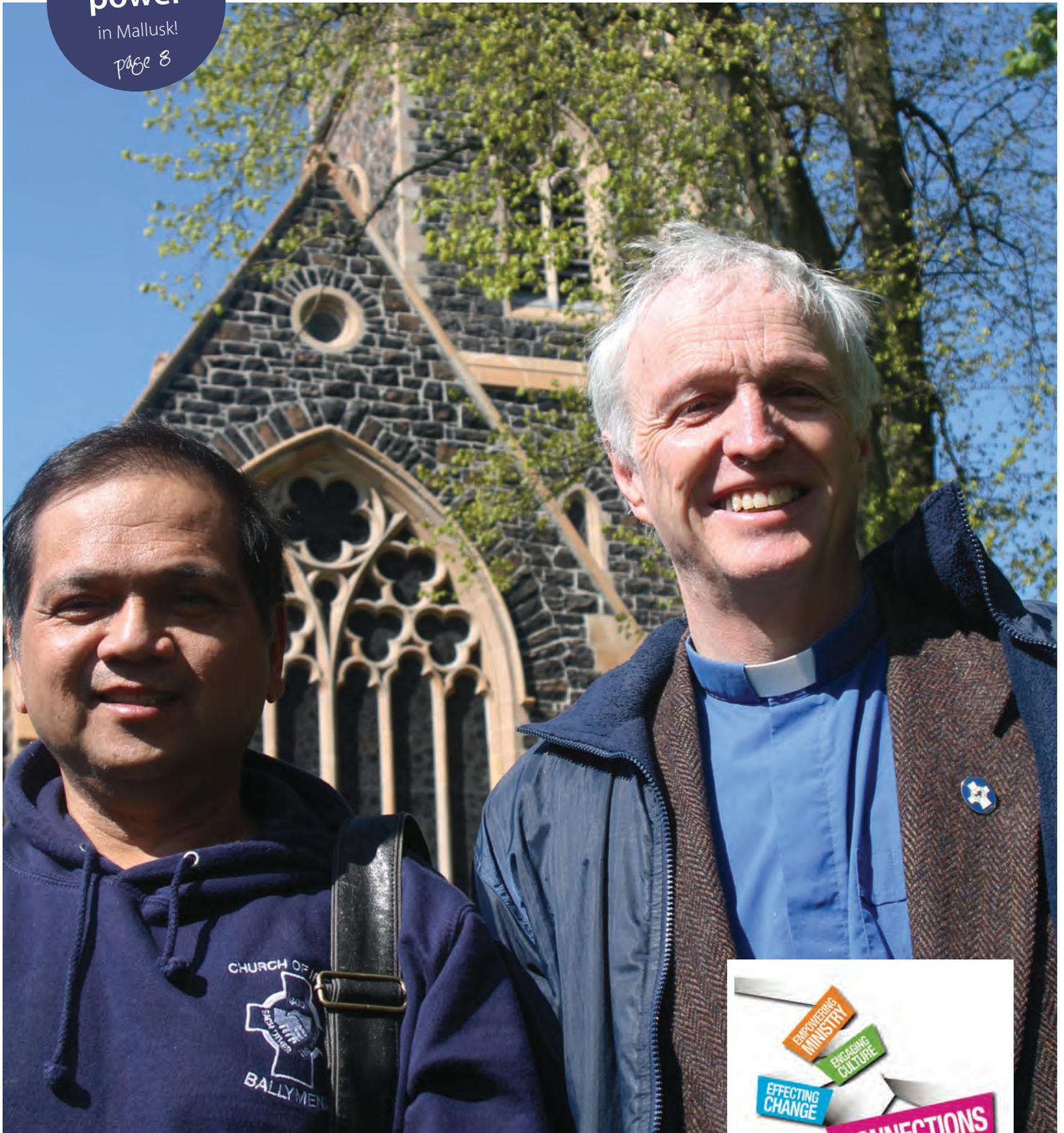
CONNOR

connections

Puppet
power

in Mallusk!

page 8



Celebrating the Vision at Pentecost

Parishes within the Rural Deanery of Coleraine united for a special Pentecost Praise service on Sunday May 19.

The rector of St Patrick's, the Rev Roger Cooke, welcomed several hundred worshippers, and during the service three people told their personal stories and selected a song or hymn that had special meaning to them.

They were Laverne Fillis, from St Patrick's, Dr Frank Dobbs from Agherton Parish and Wendy Moorehead, Billy and Derrykeighan.

A film recorded by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, especially for Pentecost Sunday was played to the large congregation. In this Bishop Alan talked about the Connor Vision Strategy which focuses on the theme Connections: Empowering Ministry, Engaging Culture and Effecting Change.

The preacher at the service, the Rev Andrew Sweeney, rector of Ballymoney, picked up this theme, speaking about engaging, equipping and enabling.

Bishop Alan's Day of Pentecost video was broadcast in churches across Connor Diocese on May 19 as parishes responded to the Bishop's invitation to engage with the Vision Strategy on this special day. Parishes were also provided with liturgy, a homily and a written message from the Bishop. See pages 10-12 for more on the Connor Vision Strategy.

Pilgrimage to Holy Land in November

Anyone interested in the Connor Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Holy Land is encouraged to submit their booking form.

The 11-day pilgrimage will take place from November 12 to November 22 2013. The first two days are spent in Jerusalem, followed by an optional trip to Masada and the Dead Sea. There will be a visit to Mount Zion and to Bethlehem. The pilgrims then move to Tiberias, and the second part of the pilgrimage takes in Jesus's lakeside ministry, Nazareth and northern Galilee.

Pilgrimage leaders are the Very Rev John Mann, Dean of Belfast, and Bishop Alan.

The cost is £1,745 sharing a twin bedded room. Brochures and booking forms are available from Dean Mann at Belfast Cathedral, telephone 028 9032 8332 or email dean@belfastcathedral.org.



Director of Music Simon Neil and members of the St Polycarp's Choir.

Choir to sing in Westminster Abbey

The Choir of St Polycarp's, Finaghy, has been invited to sing Choral Evensong in Westminster Abbey this August.

The performance follows the release of the choir's first CD 'Hail, Gladdening Light,' and will form part of a choir tour.

St Polycarp's Director of Music is Simon Neil. When he was appointed in 2009 there was a small adult choir of 12 people. "There were no children or teenagers to ensure the choir's future," Simon said.

"Four years on, the picture couldn't be more different. There are now 12 trebles, five teenagers and 16 adults. The choir has premiered a Te Deum and Evening Canticles composed specially for them by Philip Stopford and last September launched its first CD.

Simon said the key ingredients of this success were 'a clear vision and infectious enthusiasm.' But he emphasised the impact of a choral scholarship scheme that extends to 10 local schools.

"This scheme is supported by imaginative fundraising, together with the generosity and goodwill of local businesses and

individual parishioners," Simon said.

St Polycarp's Choir received further external encouragement last summer when Suzi Digby OBE, the celebrity judge of BBC Songs of Praise School Choir of the Year Competition, agreed to become the first President and Honorary Patron of St Polycarp's Music Department.

Suzi was present at the choir's summer concert on June 14 when the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis were sung in her honour.

St Polycarp's Parish Church supports and encourages the hard work of Simon and the choir. Month by month new repertoire is sung at worship, new members come into the choir and this attracts new parishioners interested in hearing a high standard of Anglican Choral Music.

Simon said: "Without the dedication of the choir's original members on my arrival none of this would have been possible. We look forward to what the future has in store for this choir and parish."

Stormont address

The Rev Mercia Malcolm, vicar of Carnmoney, delivered a talk about the friendship of CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien at two high profile events during Community Relations Week. One was on May 23 in the Senate Chamber at Stormont to an invitation-only audience of MLAs, senior civil servants and political advisors. Mercia is pictured in the chamber with Kieran McCarthy, MLA, Dr Ethel White and Miss Pat Devine, an American visitor.



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Cover photo: Outside the refurbished St Patrick's Church and tower, Ballymena (see page 5) are Canon Stuart Lloyd and Ady Camacho, a Filipino who works in Kathmandu and who spent three months experiencing mission and ministry in Ballymena.



Please contact us if you have any editorial comments or would like to contribute to the next issue of Connor Connections.

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A winter walk with my amazing family - my wife Liz and our children Peter and Ruth.

The amazing gift of family

This summer is a special time for Liz and me as we will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary.

To ensure that we can be together as a family, we will be celebrating on the island of Mull. Amidst the hectic pace of life and the many church and other activities in which we are all involved, it is good to celebrate those milestones in our lives.

There was something about the religious world in which I grew up that didn't appear to value parties. I am very grateful, however, to my family who taught me to enjoy those special moments in family life.

One of the highlights for me was my grandparents' 60th wedding anniversary. It was such a special day as family members flew in from Canada as part of the surprise party.

I am not sure if it is part of the ageing process - adding to the lack of hair and the difficulty in reading without my glasses - but I certainly have become so much more aware of the amazing gift of family.

There is the way family members offer

support and help by just being there and by being able to tell you the truth in a way that nobody else can: It is the text message, the late-night phone call, the funny birthday card or the honest appraisal of the sermon I thought I had preached well.

These are gifts for which I am very grateful and which I do not want to take for granted. I also want to appreciate them and say thank you for them now.

I would like to thank my family for just being there and for all they give to me in so many ways.

I trust we will all find time to be refreshed this summer and to enjoy the gifts of family and friends.

Grace and peace to you all,

+ Alan Connor

Pioneer Ministry and Church Planting

The Rev Ric Thorpe from Holy Trinity Brompton/ St Mellitus College was guest speaker at an information Day on Pioneer Ministry Training and Church Planting held at St Peter's Church, Belfast, on May 8.

Ric and his wife Louie led a church plant to St Paul's Shadwell in London's East End in 2005 and St Paul's then planted three further churches in urban priority areas.

Ric has a wider role as the Bishop of London's Advisor for Church Planting and

Tutor in Church Planting at St Mellitus College, helping church leaders around London and the UK in the preparation and early phases of church planting. He also coordinates an informal network of some 40 churches planted from or closely associated with Holy Trinity Brompton.

The Rev Barry Forde, chair of Connor's Vision Strategy Team, welcomed Ric who was thanked after his two hour talk by Connor Diocesan Parish Development Officer Trevor Douglas.



Leah Batchelor with her mum Allison.

'God has walked with me' says inspirational Leah

The fact that 23-year-old Leah Batchelor will embark on her third year studies at the University of Ulster in September is nothing short of a miracle.

For just 20 months ago Leah was in intensive care, conscious of all that was going on around her, feeling pain and emotion, yet not able to move a single muscle apart from her eyelids.

This beautiful and bubbly young lady had suffered a massive aneurysm that left her with a rare condition known as locked in syndrome. Doctors said she would never walk, talk or even breathe by herself again.

But with the prayers of her family, friends, her parish of St Michael's, Belfast, and even strangers around the world, Leah fought back.

And in March BBC Northern Ireland's 'Story of a Lifetime' portrayed the

tremendous courage of a young lady who never lost her faith and now thanks God that she is where she is.

"In the early days I was angry with God. I could not understand why this happened, but then I knew that I needed God beside me to help me on the journey," Leah said.

Her speech is difficult to understand. She is slowly learning to talk and walk again. Her right arm is paralysed and she has to do with her left hand everything she once did with her right. She is still beautiful and her smile lights up a room.

The aneurysm struck when Leah, a lifelong parishioner of St Michael's and a dedicated member of the Girls' Brigade at

St Mary's, Ballybeen, was bag packing in a supermarket to raise funds for a GB trip to South Africa.

"I have always had migraines, but as I was packing the bags I felt dizzy and my eyes were blurry," Leah recalled.

She was violently ill and was soon in an ambulance on her way to the Ulster Hospital where she rapidly deteriorated. Her parents Allison and Thomas called the rector of St Michael's, the Ven Barry Dodds, former Archdeacon of Belfast, who was at the family's side immediately.

"It was so painful to see her body closing down in just a couple of hours," said Barry. "Her condition became so serious she lost consciousness and they had to put her on life support.

"Leah was taken to the Royal where they discovered the aneurysm had devastated all the cells around her brain stem. She could retain all her memory and intelligence functions but her brain no longer had a path to tell other parts of her body to move."

Leah was put in an induced coma. When she was brought round the only things she could move were her eyelids. An operation on the aneurysm was ruled out because of the risk that Leah would bleed to death.

"I told them to operate and let her go," admits Allison. "The thought of Leah who was so vibrant and so full of life being only able to move her eyelids was the worst possible thing that could happen."

Leah had also considered death to be preferable to a locked in life. "I wanted people to pray that I would die," she said. "I felt like I was alive inside a dead body, but that body could still feel pain and I could not tell anyone about it.

"I prayed that God would either let me die or give me a sign to keep fighting."

That sign came six weeks after Leah's collapse. Barry recalls the moment he not only heard but saw the news. "Leah moved her little finger. Her mum caught this on her mobile phone and sent it to me. It was incredible," he said.

Leah was no longer locked in. Yet Allison explained that a hole left in Leah's head should not allow signals to go from the brain to the body. "The doctors cannot explain it. Without a shadow of a doubt it is a miracle," she said.

Leah was moved to the Stroke Ward at the Royal and later to Musgrave Park Hospital for rehabilitation. From there her determination and courage have been astounding.



Barry Dodds looks on as Leah Batchelor takes tentative steps during her physiotherapy.

"You can pray to God to make you better, but you also need to put in the effort yourself," said Leah. "I had prayed for a sign and when I got that sign I knew I had to work at it."

That first Christmas, she was given an iPad. "I was able to use it to text with my left hand, and all of a sudden I was able to communicate. I became part of the outside world again," Leah recalls.

Last August she defied expectations and went on the GB trip to South Africa with Allison as her carer. "I never doubted that I would go to South Africa," Leah said. "When I was there I did everything the others did. We worked in a crèche where we played with the children and did crafts and dancing. I also designed a mural for the others to paint."

Leah can now walk 15 metres without support, but full mobility is still some way away. "She doesn't just have to build up the strength in her muscles but has to teach her brain to tell the muscles what to do," said Alison.

She has regular speech therapy and physiotherapy. In September Leah will return to University to complete her graphic design degree.

Every Sunday she walks into St Michael's Parish Church. She believes that God has been walking with her and her family.

Barry describes Leah as an exceptional young lady. "She has been a wonderful inspiration to many people. She has a can-do spirit," he said. The former archdeacon is planning to abseil down the Europa Hotel in Belfast in September to raise funds for Leah's specialist treatment.

Preserving the past for the future at St Patrick's, Ballymena

Major work has been carried out to secure the tower of St Patrick's Church, Ballymena, and to replace some of the stone work throughout the building.

The bell ringing chamber and the organ loft needed to be protected against the elements. The project received a grant of £71,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

One of the last remaining 'Seven Towers of Ballymena,' the parish visitors' book reveals that it attracts tourists from all over the world.

The rector, the Rev Canon Stuart Lloyd said: "Visitors admire the beauty and atmosphere of St Patrick's and comment favourably on its upkeep. Parishioners appreciate the fine building they have inherited but also acknowledge the responsibility placed upon them to maintain it to a high standard for future parishioners

and for the wider community."

Cannon Lloyd expressed his thanks to everyone who had worked so hard to get this work off the ground and had contributed generously to the restoration appeal. "I have been very encouraged by the response and I'd also like to extend my thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund for seeing our vision and getting behind it," Canon Lloyd said.

Paul Mullan, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund Northern Ireland, said: "Places of worship are at the heart of many local communities and it is hugely important that these historic buildings are preserved for future generations to use and enjoy."



Valerie Ash (centre) is pictured following her commissioning as Connor MU President with the Rev Elizabeth Hanna (extreme left) and Alison Skillen who were also commissioned as office-bearers in Connor MU. With them is Bishop Alan Abernethy and the Rev Mark Taylor, rector of Whitehead, Mrs Ash's home parish.

Commissioning of Connor MU President

Valerie Ash was commissioned as Diocesan President of Connor Mothers' Union (MU) by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, at the MU Diocesan Festival Service in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

Also commissioned were the Rev Elizabeth Hanna, rector of St Nicholas, Belfast, to serve as Diocesan Faith and Policy Unit Coordinator and Alison Skillen

as South Belfast Area Chair.

MU office-bearers and members from across the diocese were present in the cathedral, as was the newly-commissioned MU All Ireland President, Phyllis Grothier.

The new Diocesan President, a parishioner at Whitehead, succeeds Moira Thom who was Diocesan President for six years.



Bishop Alan speaking during the Healing Service in Christ Church, Lisburn.



Elizabeth and Derek Swallow and John Robinson attended the Bishop's seminar in Lisburn.



Rosemary Geary and Kay Finlay ensure the tea is flowing at the St Patrick's, Jordanstown, seminar.

Bishop explores the Ministry of Healing

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, delivered three Lent talks on the Ministry of Healing, followed by a Healing Service in each of Connor's Archdeaconries.

These took place in Bushmills Parish Centre; St Patrick's, Jordanstown, and in Christ Church, Lisburn, and drew large crowds from parishes across the diocese.

In his seminar, Bishop Alan examined contrasting attitudes within the church to the Healing Ministry, highlighted some Biblical reflections, looked at healing and the Kingdom of God, suggested ways to seek help in this area, and shared his own thoughts on the Ministry of Healing.

As usual there was time for refreshment and fellowship as people from different areas enjoyed this opportunity to get together.

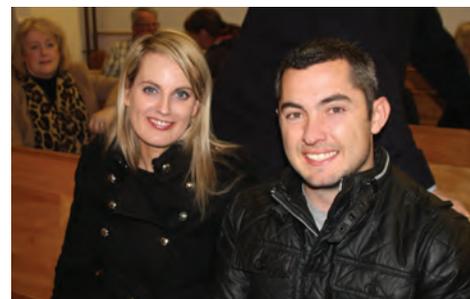
The Healing Services were a mixture of prayer, praise and thanksgiving, with special focus on praying for those in need of healing or help in any aspect of their daily lives. At each service there was an opportunity to come forward to receive prayer with the laying on of hands.

In his address at the Christ Church service, Bishop Alan said: "Our hope is if you come forward for healing that you will experience again something that you already know – that you are cherished by God."

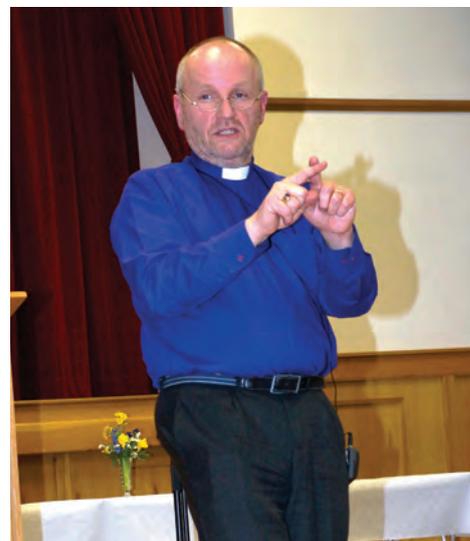
In laying on hands, the Bishop said, 'we are simply obeying Christ's instructions to pray for the sick.'



Enjoying a cuppa at the Jordanstown seminar are, from left: Billy Stewart, Ken Houston, and Alan Hibbert.



Leanne Hynes and Rob Casone travelled from St John's, Crumlin, to attend the Lisburn talk.



Bishop Alan makes a point at the Bushmills seminar.



Christ Church parishioners Bobby and Mary Moore at the seminar on February 25.



Bishop Alan with Marina Bradley, Florence Miller and Alana Gibson at the Jordanstown Lent Seminar. The ladies are all members of St John's, Whitehouse.



The CME Retreat at Rydall Hall in the Lake District which took place during April. Photo courtesy of Archdeacon Stephen Forde.

Curates' Retreat a first for CME

For the first time curates from across Ireland, including a large number from Connor, came together for a period of retreat as part of the Continuing Ministerial Education programme.

A total of 26 curates were at Rydall Hall in the English Lake District for the retreat which ran from April 23-26.

With them were members of the CME team, including the new Central Director of CME the Rev Jennifer McWhirter; Belfast Regional Co-ordinator and rector of Dunmurry the Rev Denise Acheson; Laurie Randall of the pastoral support group; the Bishop of Connor the Rev Alan Abernethy; the Archdeacon of Connor the Ven Dr Stephen McBride and the Archdeacon of Dalriada, the Ven Stephen Forde. The retreat was led by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann.

Dean Mann led five sessions on the topic 'a view from the spiritual edgeland.' There

was time for reflection and prayer during each session and every evening, while the afternoons were free time.

Denise said the all-Ireland CME programme had been designed to standardise training for curates across the church. "Previously different dioceses delivered different programmes," she said. "CME builds on the components laid down in training at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute."

The groundwork for the new programme of CME was carried out by Andrew McNeile and it will be delivered by Jennifer McWhirter, former rector of Templepatrick and Donegore, Connor Diocese, who will work closely with the Director of the Theological Institute, Dr Maurice

Elliott, and the House of Bishops.

The CME regional groups meet four times a year and all curates attend an intensive study week at the Theological Institute.

Girls' Choir can be heard in St Anne's

A new Girls' Choir is enchanting parishioners and visitors to services at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

The choir, formed by Master of the Choristers David Stevens, is made up of 14 girls aged 10-18 from a number of local schools.

The girls rehearse on Monday and Wednesday, and sing at Evensong every Wednesday at 5.30pm and at the 11am and 3.30pm Sunday Services every other weekend.

David said: "It is a big commitment but they seem to enjoy it. They are paid a small wage and get weekly singing lessons with Catherine Harper."

The choir has also been recorded by the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. "All People that on Earth do dwell" will form part of the soundtrack in the background creating a realistic atmosphere in the old Meeting House, Cultra.

David said: "Our next step is getting a Boys' Choir established and continuing to make the Cathedral a more musical place in terms of services and other musical activities."



A group of 38 parishioners and friends from the grouped parishes of Ardclinis, Tickmacreavan, Layde and Cushendun travelled to Colebrooke Parish Church in Co Fermanagh for a Festival of Flowers on May 25. They also toured Colebrooke House and gardens, home of Lord and Lady Brookeborough, before returning to the Glens. Some of the group are pictured – the rest were all otherwise engaged!

207 charities benefit from annual sit-out

Representatives of 207 charities received a share of the £192,000 raised by the Christmas 2012 Black Santa Sit-Out at the annual Good Samaritans' Service on February 3.

Special guests were Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alderman Gavin Robinson, and Lady Mayoress Lindsay Robinson.

The Dean of Belfast the Very Rev John Mann has visited a number of projects which have benefited from the Black Santa appeal. "Today the spotlight turns from the giver of funds to those who put the money raised to good effect," the Dean said at the service. "Each of you is part of an organisation that may touch thousands of lives in our community."

The Lady Mayoress presented cheques to the groups working with children and youth, family related charities, international groups and medical research.

Lord Mayor Robinson presented cheques to the large number of groups serving the community, describing the sit-out as 'an eagerly anticipated and respected fundraising activity.'



Dean John Mann with the Lord and Lady Mayoress of Belfast at the Good Samaritans' Service.

New rector at St Peter and St James

The Rev Brian Lacey is the new rector of the United Parish of St Peter and St James, Belfast.

Brian studied archaeology at Queen's University. He was Sexton in St Anne's Cathedral before training for Ordination. During that time he served as Student Reader in St Thomas's and was on placement in Ballymacarett in east Belfast, the Student Chaplaincy at Queen's, the grouped parishes of Finaghy and Upper Malone, and the Independent Evangelical Church in Gran Canaria.

In 2010 he was ordained and served as Curate Assistant in the parish of Kilconriola (Ballymena) and Ballyclug.



A young parishioner, centre, gets to meet the St Brigid's puppets Arnie, left, with Ernest Arthur; Oscar, right, with Peter Kirch, and Bert, relaxing with Chris McCabe and Kerry McCabe.

Puppet team inspires young imaginations

You have to hand it to them, the puppet ministry team from St Brigid's, Mallusk, make engaging young imaginations look like child's play!

The team brought their alter egos – Bert, Arnie, Poppy and Oscar the Orangutan – to a children's storytelling day in the Good Book Shop in Belfast at Easter.

The kids had a ball, not only meeting the four felt friends, reading and getting their faces painted, but also hearing the Rev Adrian McCartney, leader of Boring Wells, read from his book 'Sheppy: A stray dog finds a home.' Keeping Adrian right was his dog Shep!

The puppet ministry team was founded last year by Peter Kirch. "Church Jesus Ministries put on a puppet show in St Brigid's and invited people along to their training day. Their performance was

brilliant, it was a great way of getting a message across and I felt it was something I would love to be involved in," said Peter.

"It has taken a bit of practice to get the hand and speech co-ordination right. We now have four puppeteers and a couple of narrators.

"We write a new script for each show, one that will be right for the occasion. Most shows have been in our own church, but we would like to do more and are working towards getting our own equipment."

Anyone interested in booking the St Brigid's puppet ministry team can contact Peter by at lwandjack@yahoo.co.uk.

Lively discussion at St Mark's, Ballymacash

The annual Holy Week Discussion Forum at St Mark's Parish Church, Lisburn, attracted a record attendance.

Richard McReynolds, Vice-Principal of Laurelhill Community College chaired a panel of guest speakers comprising Councillors Ronnie Crawford and Pat Catney from Lisburn Council; Kathleen Rogers, Young Parents' representative of Connor MU and the Ven Gregor McCamley, former Archdeacon of Down.

There was plenty of participation from the floor as the panel responded to questions on topical issues including integrated education, the role of the Press in a free

society, the perception of the Church in an increasingly secular community and the impact of sport on society.

The rector of St Mark's, the Rev Canon George Irwin, said: "This Forum is an opportunity for the Church to take the initiative in promoting debate and creative thinking about issues affecting the life of the whole community and to challenge Church members to focus on the sense of social responsibility which is part and parcel of the outworking of a living faith."

The annual Discussion Forum at St Mark's began during the Decade of Evangelism in the 1990s.



Pancake tossing in Larne are the Ven Stephen Forde, actress Olivia Nash and the Rev Jim Caldwell.

Celebrity pancake party in Larne!

Larne and Inver Parish marked Shrove Tuesday with a 'Celebrity Pancake Party' hosted by curate the Rev Jim Caldwell.

Parishioners were invited to the curatage to make their own pancakes and enjoy an evening with comedy actress Olivia Nash, aka 'Ma' from the 'Hole in the Wall Gang.'

Olivia said: "It's great to have an evening like this which brings people together for fellowship and fun and the pancakes were absolutely delicious!"



Ordination in St Paul's, Lisburn

St Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn, held a Service of Ordination to the Diaconate of Stephen McWhirter (above, with Bishop Alan) on February 6.

Stephen was joined on the night by his wife the Rev Jennifer McWhirter, his daughter Harvest and family and friends.

He was ordained by the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor, and the preacher was the Rt Rev John McDowell, Bishop of Clogher.

Key role for Rowan

Rowan Mann, daughter of the Dean of Belfast the Very Rev John Mann and his wife Helen, was a Server during the Enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury on March 21.

Rowan carried the Book of the Gospels in front of Archbishop Justin Welby when he went to read the Gospel.

Rowan, who lives in Deal, Kent, is a parishioner at Canterbury Cathedral, where she is a Server and a Steward.

Making school fun for Nepal slum kids

A team of three from Ballymena Parish made learning fun for a group of little slum children when they visited Nepal.

The rector, Canon Stuart Lloyd, Ian McKay and Cheryl Sinclair were involved in a project working with pre-school children in the Balku slum in the capital Kathmandu. Canon Lloyd's niece Deirdre Zimmerman had previously shown the team round the slum where she was working on a nutrition project, and had also taken them into a church run by a pastor named Daniel.

"We heard the inspiring story of how Daniel had experienced a calling into the slum to help the street children. He began gathering the children together, the adults followed and eventually a church was formed," said Cheryl.

One of the outcomes of Daniel's work was a small pre-school for the children in the slum. "When we saw all these lovely children doing their sums we felt inspired to return to the school and work with them," said Cheryl. "Many of the pre-schools in Nepal teach by rote learning and there is very little creativity. I have an art background so connecting with the children through art was something that I could offer."

Cheryl ran craft sessions during the Dashai festival holiday, and after the festival the team also ran two days in the pre-school incorporating various craft activities.

"The children were so enthusiastic and we could see that they had not had much opportunity to draw and create before. We enjoyed their exuberance," said Cheryl.

A team from a local bible school also made a gospel presentation in the church for the children.

The team visited the church several times, Cheryl ran some activities in the Sunday school where the children enthusiastically joined in praise songs, and Canon Lloyd preached. "There is great vitality in the services and we loved their enthusiasm in worship," Cheryl added.

The parish has funded two of Daniel's pre-school teachers to go on a training course which will help develop the quality of the children's education and give them a richer learning experience.

"Every visit to Nepal is always an inspiring experience. This time we felt we built new relationships with Pastor Daniel's church and the children in Balku slum and we hope we can develop this further in the future," said Cheryl.



Cheryl Sinclair helping the children with their artwork (above) and the kids hard at work (below).



Stepping into the challenge



For some time now we have been listening. Listening to the overwhelming responses to our diocesan survey.

Listening as we have made our way across the diocese, meeting vestries, speaking with clergy, and spending time both with those who consider themselves very much a part of our church, and those who, for a wide variety of reasons, do not. As we have been listening we have, I pray, been learning from one another and from God as to how we might articulate his mission of love, hope, forgiveness and reconciliation here in our own context, the Diocese of Connor.

What has emerged is a paradoxical picture. The diocesan survey has enabled us to acknowledge and give thanks for the many ways in which, right across the diocese, many churches and individuals are faithfully seeking to serve God. It also highlighted, with striking uniformity across our parishes, three key areas of concern. At diocesan synod in 2011 the survey team presented

these findings. Although some of it was and remains difficult to hear, we simply must listen. First, we have discerned a lack of engagement with, and even awareness of, the culture in which we live. Second, there is a critical need to grow and develop leadership at every level, lay and ordained, to carry out our shared ministry and mission. Third, even where there is an awareness of the need to change, there is often a lack of knowing how to effect such change.

As such we are at a critical, and yet exciting, juncture. Giving thanks for all that has gone before us, we simply must act and step into the challenge that lies ahead. As your servant and as your bishop I am asking for the diocese as a whole to help us as we journey with Christ under the new **Vision Strategy** for Connor - **Connections - Engaging Culture, Empowering Ministry, Effecting Change**. I trust that what follows will answer some questions, and perhaps provoke a few more, about this new strategy and the role we all share in it.

Grace and peace,

+ Alan Connor

The strategy team

The team is comprised of three groups -

- the Bishop and Archdeacons,
- the Diocesan Secretary, Accountant and Development Officer, and
- appointed lay and clerical members.

In alphabetical order these are: The Rev Barry Forde (chair), Zara Genoe, Pauline High, the Rev Alan McCann, Dean John Mann, the Rev Andrew Sweeney. We have also invited Sir Bruce Robinson from the Presbyterian Church to provide his insights and observations.



Where does the new Vision Strategy fit in with the diocese?

The new Vision Strategy occupies the space previously held by Building For Generations, with a Vision Strategy Team, appointed by the bishop with the permission of Diocesan Council, tasked with implementing the vision. A new finance team has also been appointed by Diocesan Council to think critically about the finances of the diocese and how they might best serve our ministry and mission.



What the new Vision Strategy *isn't*...

It is not the place of the Vision Strategy or the team to tell churches what their specific priorities should be, how they should worship, or in what manner they organise themselves. The process of listening throughout has been to dialogue and journey with churches, not to direct them as to what they must look like. Further, although we seek to be considered and strategic, it is not simply an organisational response to organisational needs. It is not a business plan for a better church!



What is the Vision then?

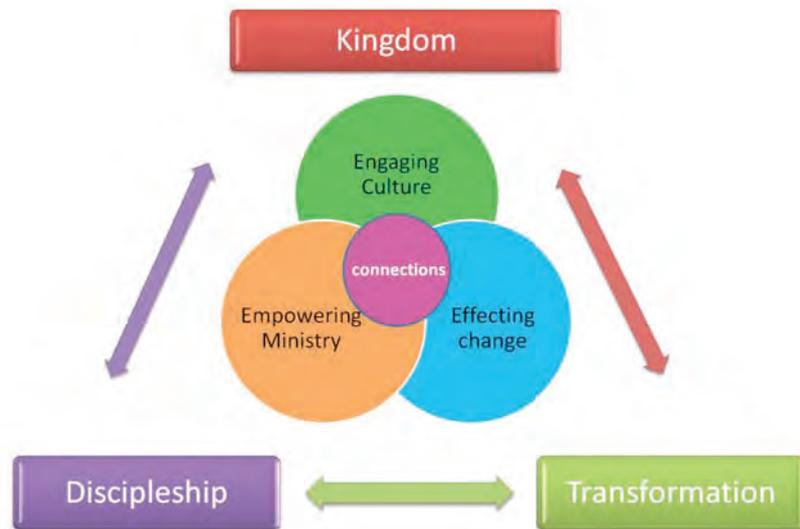
The vision is a response to the critical needs, hopes and aspirations of churches throughout the diocese.

We have articulated the overall vision of the diocese - **Engaging Culture, Empowering Ministry, Effecting Change**. It is vital that we discern in this the deeper foundations of seeking the Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven, of being disciples who make disciples, and seeing the transformational work of God in our lives and world. These core biblical principles underpin all we seek to do.

The Vision Strategy is and must always be an articulation in our own context of the mission of God. It is the hope and remit of the Vision team to serve, equip and resource the diocese, and

individual churches as we journey in differing ways towards addressing the

needs and opportunities identified.



Vision

- *To be a church that engages culture, empowers ministry, & effects change*

Journey

- The vision is integral to every aspect of Diocesan life
- New communities of faith are planted in areas of opportunity & need
- We grow & care for leaders in new and existing ministries
- Every generation is valued, and the missing generations are reached
- Every church seeks to bless, serve, and challenge its local community
- Every member has a ministry, and every member is a missionary
- The local church seeks and serves a global vision
- We seek and share excellence in worship, church life and governance

Milestones

- Specific targets along the journey to work towards, meet, and pass

Maps

- Clear, appropriate, and purposeful communication to see where we are going and to share direction

Signposts

- Prayer & intercession – this is a heavenly venture, not a human project
- Worship, word & sacrament – adoration, not activity is our primary calling
- Truth & grace, justice, mercy and humility – are the requirements of God, without which our planning is both vain and in vain
- We are a triple vision people – up, in and out. We love God, one another, and the world around us.

How can we move forward?

Through prayer and discussion our thinking has gathered around the following concepts:

Vision - the mission of God articulated in our context

Journey - the key directions we seek to move in

Milestones - the specific targets we can set and meet along the way

Maps - clear communication to guide and share direction

Signposts - the values and characteristics that mark all we are and do

A Prayer for Connor Diocese

Almighty God, inspire with your Holy Spirit the people of Connor Diocese. Grant to Bishop Alan your grace of leadership on the pattern of Christ. May all your people be filled with inner strength, to witness compassionately and with understanding, in the parishes of which they are a part, and in the communities they serve; knowing the power that is at work to renew and restore, to heal and transform lives that reach out for direction and meaning Help us to make this prayer our own, and real for each new each day we live, through Jesus Christ our Lord and King. Amen

Please pray for

- the people and clergy of the diocese – our richest resource
- wisdom for our civic and church leaders

A Prayer for Vision and Resources

Almighty God, giver of all grace, grant to the Diocese of Connor the vision and direction that is your will. Support with your Holy Spirit all who have been chosen to lead the programme of renewal and redirection in these days. Resource with fresh structures, support and new energy, the lives of all your people. May we ever seek your glory and the extension of your Kingdom, formed in love and sacrifice, in and through our Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Please pray for

- a spirit of thankfulness for all we have to build on
- courage to walk the journey which lies ahead of us in the diocese

To God, who by the power at work within us, is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.
Ephesians 3: 20



Where do we go from here?

In response to listening to the people of the diocese, and confident of the call of God on His church, we have discerned some clear priorities. We need to ensure that this vision runs through the DNA of the diocese - every appointment, synod, council meeting and so on. Growing and developing people who will in turn grow and develop people is vital. Seeking excellence in all that we do, learning from and sharing our perspectives, resources, and practices with one another will enhance us all. Engaging with the community that surrounds us, both as churches and as individuals who go out into the everyday world, is our mandate from God who became incarnate in his world. We need to address the facts of decline in children's ministry, the absence of those in their 20s and 30s across the diocese as a whole, and to discern in individual settings generational gaps. In some parts of the diocese we need to acknowledge that new communities of faith need to emerge. As we engage in this mission locally we must retain a strong vision of being part of the global mission and the global church. In all this we will



need to capture and grow the 'ministry of all the baptized', and, in the going out as God's people, to live out the prayer, "Send us out in the power of your Spirit, to live and work to your praise and glory."

Developing a culture of vision, planting new communities of faith, growing leaders, reaching the disenfranchised, impacting the community, seeing the whole people of God engaged in the mission and ministry, enhancing our global vision, seeking excellence in all we do and sharing it with one another. This the discerned task that lies before all of us. It is a work that will never fully be completed, and in each context the particular priorities and needs will be different. As a team however we are committed to planning and implementing a wide variety of initiatives to support you and the diocese as a whole in the service of this vision.

Where do you go from here?

In the listening we have, time and again, heard fears in parishes that the diocese will develop a vision telling them what they must do. This is not our desire. The flipside of this is that the diocese cannot be expected to deliver the vision in each parish. We need to develop and grow together, and so we would ask you to consider:

- communicating the Vision Strategy of the diocese in your parish, through teaching, at vestry meetings, to your groups and organisations
- encouraging your parish to think about how it engages culture, empowers ministry, and effects change
- using the Vision Strategy symbol on all your communications - service sheets, magazine, announcement sheets,

powerpoint visuals, websites

- committing to an ongoing engagement with the Vision Strategy as it makes its way through Rural Deanery meetings, and other diocesan events

Throughout the process it is our intention to communicate regularly through a variety of means - synod, training days and events, the website, Connor Connections, through the rural deanery networks, and in whatever way necessary to take hold of the task that lies before us. We are at the beginning of a journey and there are no guarantees as to where we might end up. It is our genuine hope to serve you and the diocese along the way. We ask for and greatly value your prayers. Please be assured of our prayers for you in all that you are and do.



The Rev Helen McArthur and Canon George Irwin join in worship at the start of the Training Day.



Guest speaker Bishop Steven Croft shares a joke with the Connor clergy.



Taking part in group discussions.



Enjoying Bishop Steven Croft's humour!



Bishop Steven and Bishop Alan.



At the Training Day at Lisburn Cathedral are, from left: Bishop Alan Abernethy; Parish Development Officer Trevor Douglas; seminar leader the Rev Dorothy McVeigh; guest speaker the Rt Rev Steven Croft, Bishop of Sheffield; Vision Strategy Group Chairman the Rev Barry Forde and seminar leader Nicola Brown of CREED.

Training Day looks at engaging culture

Clergy from across Connor Diocese attended a Training Day on April 11 with guest speaker the Rt Rev Steven Croft, Bishop of Sheffield.

The event, held in Lisburn Cathedral, was organised by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Parish Development Officer Trevor Douglas and members of the Connor Vision Strategy Group.

Other speakers were the Rev Dorothy McVeigh, rector of Annaghmore in the Diocese of Armagh, who delivered a seminar on 'Life in the Country,' looking at mission and ministry in rural communities.

Another seminar entitled 'Want to be 'Pro-Vision?'' was delivered by Dennis Johnston and Nicola Brown of CREED. It focused on participation and insights of Pro-Vision, a step by step plan to help churches work through issues of finance, resources and generous giving.

In a third seminar, 'Take Back the City,' Bishop Croft drew upon his insights from both research and practice into how the church can engage in increasingly diverse, multi-cultural and ever changing urban towns and cities.

Bishop Croft sits on the Church of England Archbishops' Council and is Chair of the Ministry Council. Formerly warden in St John's College in Durham, as well as Missioner and Leader of the Church of England Fresh Expressions team, he is a gifted author, thinker and communicator.

He is passionate about how the church can engage with large swathes of the population who have lost touch with the Christian faith.

In his opening address, he spoke about the context in which he works in his own diocese in Sheffield, and his attendance at the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops in Rome last October. The Bishop outlined what he said were significant features of today's culture in relation to change and faith.

He said there was no systematic, readymade solution to engage culture, but said hope is a virtue and hope is vital. He also introduced certain disciplines each church needs to practice.

Following the seminars and lunch in the Cathedral hall, the Rev Barry Forde, chair of the Vision Strategy team, spoke about the vision, outlining its background, goals and processes.

Bishop Croft described the Vision Strategy as an 'interesting and creative process.' "I look forward to following its progress as you go forward," he said.

The Bishop finished the day by looking at leadership in a changing context.

St Patrick's night at Lisburn Cathedral

A St Patrick's Night Bash was hosted by Lisburn Cathedral with 150 people gathering for a celebration of the Gospel coming to this land.

Cathedral curate, the Rev Simon Genoe, said: "It was a joy to see our 20-30s fellowship group organise an event of this calibre which engaged those of every age."

The cooking was organised by parishioner and former restaurateur, Paul Duggan, who guided his willing helpers through the task of making perfect Irish stew!

There was face-painting and games led by Zara Genoe. During the meal, everyone was treated to a musical medley from parishioners Sarah Calvert and Johnny Irvine.

The food was followed by dynamic and enthusiastic worship and Simon gave a short account of the story of St Patrick.

After the singing of a new song 'The Cross Stands Above it All,' the rector Canon Sam Wright closed a great night in prayer.



After 54 years of devoted service to Ardclinis Parish Church, Carnlough, Betty Scroggy retired from her position as organist. To mark the occasion, the Rev Helen MacArthur presented Betty with a Royal Doulton figurine, flowers, and voucher for jewellery. Pictured from left are William Wright, Churchwarden, Betty, Kate Magill, Churchwarden and Helen.

COGS joins in three day Faith Fest

Parishioners from the Church of the Good Shepherd, Monkstown, and St Oliver Plunkett Roman Catholic Church, Lenadoon, visited each other's Prayer Rooms on Saturday May 18.

Some of the Monkstown members also joined the Benedictine Monks in Rostrevor over the weekend to take part in 24/7 prayer with the monks.

The exchanges were part of a three day Faith Fest to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, inspired by the worldwide 24/7 prayer initiative.



The young group from Norrkoping at Junction One during their exchange visit to All Saints' Parish, Antrim.

Young Swedes visit link parish in Antrim

All Saints' Parish, Antrim, welcomed a group of 23 visitors from Sweden as part of their ongoing link with Soderledskyrkan (the church on the southern road) in Norrkoping.

Although the formal partnership between the Diocese of Connor and the Diocese of Linkoping finished a few years ago, Antrim and Borgs Forsamling have maintained their links and the visit at the beginning of May is the 12th exchange in the 14 year programme.

The members of the confirmation group and their leaders stayed in the Belfast Backpacker Hostel having flown into Dublin from Skavsta, south of Stockholm. The party was led by the new rector of Borgs, the Rev Pontus Martenon; Markus Svensson, parish youth worker; Anna Skoldh, worship leader and Anna Norden who has just completed her theological degree.

Last September Anna spent a month in Antrim with Archdeacon Stephen McBride and the Rev Adrian Halligan, pastoral administrator. During this time she led the confirmation group, preached at services and visited the Diocesan Council meeting in Agherton where the Bishop of Connor presented her with a Connor commemorative plate.

The Swedish group visited the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and were entertained in Antrim Parish Centre before an evening of bowling and games with members of All Saints' youth group.

The young visitors were very impressed with the shops in Belfast city centre



Visitors Anna Norden and the Rev Pontus Martenon exchange gifts with the Rev Adrian Halligan and Archdeacon Stephen McBride at Antrim Parish.

and the hospitality and friendliness of many people they encountered. Belfast has similarities with their home town of Norrkoping as both were thriving 19th century industrial centres based around a river which, following a period of decline, are now experiencing a revival.

The group travelled by train to Antrim on the Sunday morning and their liturgical dances and songs were thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended morning service. Archdeacon McBride interviewed Pontus on his first visit to Antrim and gifts were exchanged. Pontus presented All Saints' with a comprehensive guide to Linkoping's historic cathedral and received a High Cross made from bog oak.

Following lunch at Redz Diner in Junction One and a walk through the newly refurbished gardens at Clothworthy House, the rather weary visitors returned to Belfast to prepare for their return flight to Sweden.

Archdeacon McBride said: "It was a fantastic visit and now we will begin to plan a return visit from Antrim to Norrkoping."

Ministry to Deaf has new Chaplain

The Rev Jennifer McWhirter has been appointed Chaplain for the Church of Ireland Ministry to Deaf People.

Jennifer is a former rector of Templepatrick and Donegore Parishes in Connor Diocese and is now Co-ordinator of Continuing Ministerial Education (CME) at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute. She is also Chaplain at Musgrave Park Hospital.

She succeeds the Rev Canon Will Murphy as Chaplain for the Ministry to Deaf People. Will retired at the end of May after more than 33 years in the role.

Looking forward to her new chaplaincy, Jennifer said: "I think I bring a strong pastoral background and love of people. Many of the people I will be visiting are elderly and I have much experience both from hospital and parish of ministry to the elderly and vulnerable."

Jennifer has just completed an NVQ Level Three in British Sign Language and is also trained in deaf awareness.



Some of the Connor MU members who took part in the annual Belfast Marathon May Day walk. From left: Mellissa Jeffers, Moira Thom, Kathleen Rodgers and Elizabeth Hanna. Photo: John Kelly.

Bishop Alan in Cambridge to mark Taylor anniversary

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, preached in Cambridge at a Service marking the 400th anniversary of the birth of Jeremy Taylor.

The service was held on May 5 in The Chapel of Gonville and Caius College where Taylor studied

Renowned for his prolific and poetic writings, Jeremy Taylor was a Church of England cleric who became a chaplain to King Charles I and was imprisoned several times during the English Civil War.

At the Restoration, he was appointed Bishop of Down and Connor and later Dromore. He commissioned the building of Dromore Cathedral where he is buried.



The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, shows Archbishop Richard Clarke an item in the library collection at St Anne's Cathedral.

'A place of rest and spiritual recreation'

A new library for reference and reflection has opened in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

The opening on February 21 was attended by the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, and Mr John Killen, MA, Librarian at the Linen Hall Library, Belfast.

The library is intended for the use of the clergy and lay people of the dioceses of Down and Dromore and Connor as well as anyone who wishes to access the works of reference that the library holds.

These include a number of volumes that have been in the possession of the Cathedral for a long time as well as the remnants of an old diocesan library. To this core of books have been added donations from clergy and lay members of the two dioceses and from other sources.

Subjects include: The Church of Ireland; general church history, Biblical Studies; spirituality, liturgy, pastoral studies, theology, ethics and biographies of prominent Christian leaders.

Speaking at the opening, the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, expressed thanks to Paul Gilmore, who was on placement in the Cathedral for six months and whose efforts had resulted in the establishment of the library,

He also spoke of St Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary. "She has been seen as a teacher and one dedicated to the encouragement of the whole person through understanding and compassion," the Dean said. "This seems to encourage us to further this Cathedral, dedicated to St Anne, as a place of study."

Archbishop Clarke said there would always be a place for books in their physical form. "They connect us with our heritage and our history and cathedrals have always been a place of learning," he said.

He said the library would serve as a place of rest and spiritual recreation. "This is a wonderful project and I know this library will be a place of divine learning," the Archbishop added.

Many of the items on display were previously stored in the Muniment Room, located at the top of a spiral staircase – not the most accessible place for a historical collection! The new library is available during the opening hours of the Cathedral from Monday to Friday.

Special quiet days of retreat and days for individual study are to be arranged for clergy and lay church workers on one day each month.



At Grace's commissioning service in Magheragall are, from left: The rector the Rev Nicholas Dark, Grace's mum Elizabeth Park, Grace, her dad Ian Park and Steve McIlwaine, representative of Interserve.

Grace spends a year working for human rights in Cambodia

Magheragall parishioner Grace Park is spending a year in Cambodia as part of Interserve's short-term mission programme.

Grace was commissioned at a service in Magheragall on January 20.

Grace said: "Interserve is an international, inter-denominational Christian mission organisation that aims to share God's love in word and action by placing people in different areas of work in many different sectors.

"They do this primarily by working with existing organisations such as hospitals and sometimes by setting up new projects."

Grace was placed as Advocacy and Management Advisor in the Cambodian Independent Teacher's Association (CITA).

"Based in Phnom Penh, I will support the development and implementation of an advocacy strategy to promote and protect the rights of teachers and will also be seconded to the Cambodian Trade Union Organisation to help advise on trade union and workers' rights," she explained.

"One campaign I will no doubt be involved in is the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) which aims to address the gap at pre-primary and lower secondary schools

in quality education. The main reason for this seems to be due to the severe lack of well-trained, well-supported teachers both in Cambodia and further afield."

Grace is also supporting CITA staff and elected officers in networking and building links with other national and international advocacy organisations, donors, trade unions and organisations working in education to increase CITA's profile and for fundraising purposes.

"I wanted to use the skills and knowledge I had gained as part of my Masters in International Development Law and Human Rights in the areas of social justice issues that I am passionate about in a human rights context and at a grassroots or local level where people can be empowered," Grace said.

She added that she was answering God's calling to be an advocate and stand up for others

"In doing so I will be helping workers who suffer exploitation such as those in the garment industry who are underpaid and are in appalling working conditions," Grace said.

Festival of Preaching at Lisburn Cathedral

On Saturday March 2 Lisburn Cathedral hosted its first ever Festival of Preaching when the Dean and Chapter invited preachers from across the province to be inspired and equipped in their ministry.

More than 80 people attended and were welcomed by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, who led a liturgy which thanked God for His Word and prayed for a renewal of the Church.

Keynote speaker was the Rev Charlie Cleverly from St Aldate's Oxford, who gave encouragement on the place of preaching.

Participants had a choice of four seminars in the morning, repeated after lunch, giving everyone the opportunity to enjoy two seminars during the day.

Charlie Cleverly facilitated on the subject of 'Preaching with Imagination,' the Rev Vanessa Conant from St Paul's and St George's in Edinburgh spoke on the theme of 'Teaching Christian Living in a Secular Age,' the Rev Simon Genoe, curate of Lisburn Cathedral, shared on 'Preaching and Teaching those in their 20s and 30s,' and Bishop Elect Ferron Glenfield taught on the subject of 'Unpacking the Preaching of the Word of God.'

The feedback forms confirmed that people found each of the seminars insightful, powerful and helpful, leaving delegates with much to consider and also encouraging them to keep going with their preaching.

The day concluded with worship lead by the Very Rev John Bond, Dean of Connor.

The rector of Lisburn Cathedral, Canon Sam Wright, expressed thanks to everyone who had contributed to this very successful festival.

Graduation of former training co-ordinator

Peter Hamill, former Training Co-ordinator for Connor Diocese, has graduated from the University of Warwick with a PhD in Education and Religion.

Dr Hamill's thesis was based on research carried out with Children's and Youth leaders in Connor Diocese and the wider Church of Ireland.

Dr Hamill said: "My thanks to those in Connor Diocese who supported me through this work and I hope it provides a legacy for supporting the leaders in such a vital ministry."



Bishop Hilary and Beryl Dobbs on the beach at Portstewart.

How partnership is changing lives in Yei

Bishop Hilary of Yei exchanged the hot, dusty climate of South Sudan for the bracing north coast winds during a visit to Connor in February.

The Bishop was in Ireland and the UK meeting with dioceses and parishes who have partnered and supported the church in Yei, including Connor.

He spoke at a Sudan Focus Evening organised by CMS Ireland, reflecting on the present situation in South Sudan which became independent in July 2011. He said he was delighted that his aspiration to build six primary schools in the Diocese of Yei had been surpassed with the completion of a total of eight primary schools.

He referred to the success of Mongo Primary School which was built with funds donated by Connor Diocese, and talked of his hopes for the construction of a church-run secondary school in the area.

Bishop Hilary reflected on January's visit to Yei by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and a Connor team and expressed his delight that the Partnership Agreement between the two dioceses had been extended for a further five years.

During the week, the Bishop stayed in Broughshane with the Dean of Connor, the Very Rev John Bond and his wife Joyce, preaching at the midweek service.

He attended a CME meeting held in St John's Parish, Malone, and stayed in Larne with the Archdeacon of Dalriada, the Ven Stephen Forde. Bishop Hilary met parishioners of St Cedma's before heading to Agherton as the guest of Dr Frank and Beryl Dobbs.

The Bishop attended the Women's World Day of Prayer service and enjoyed a bracing Saturday morning stroll on the beach in Portstewart with parishioners before a visit to the Giant's Causeway.

He travelled to Ballymoney Parish as guest of the Rev Andrew Sweeney and took part in the Sunday service.

Bishop Hilary said: "This visit to Connor Diocese is extremely important, allowing me to reconnect and to see the people who are behind the partnership, supporting it from this end. It is also an opportunity for me to show my appreciation of the assistance they have given that is changing lives in South Sudan.

"This visit reinforces our partnership following the signing of the second five year agreement during Bishop Alan's visit to Yei in January."



Reading a lesson at the CME meeting. Archdeacon Stephen Forde and the Rev Brian Lacey look on.



Bishop Hilary and Dr Frank Dobbs enjoy the sights at the Giant's Causeway.



Lisburn Cathedral Scout Troop and leader Paul Duggan with Noel Irwin, District Commissioner (left), and Lisburn district executive members at the Lisburn and District Scout Council St George's Day service in the Cathedral on April 28. Included are Councillor Margaret Tolerton (Deputy Mayor of Lisburn) and Basil McCrea, MLA. Photo: John Kelly.

Making a business of mission

CMS Ireland Mission Associates Mark and Ali Gill from Monkstown have served with the United Mission to Nepal and with Human Development and Community Services in Nepal. Mark was Project Manager of the Mai Hydro Power Plant in east Nepal, before the couple returned home in June. Here he gives a personal reflection on the value of 'Business as Mission.'

When I was seconded from CMS Ireland in 1983 to the United Mission to Nepal to work with Himal Hydro and General Construction the concept of 'Business as Mission' was virtually unheard of.

In fact it was introduced in Nepal in the early 1960s by a Norwegian engineer, Odd Hoftun, who was inspired by the needs of rural Nepal and committed his life to the Lord through economic and industrial development. A vocational training school was set up and during their apprenticeship the young trainees stayed in hostels and were trained and cared for by missionaries.

Today in Butwal in the central plains of Nepal there are more than two dozen churches in a town full of opportunities for economic development and witness as a result of the seeds sown by Hoftun.

The apprentices went on to serve in companies set up by the United Mission of Nepal including furniture, hydro, bio-gas, plumbing, electrical and water. Through its industrial development work the Mission was able to send missionaries into remote areas to work and witness.

As projects were built in different parts of Nepal, witness was given through our work with the companies, encouraging the growth of the local church. In mission speak, it was church planting, although I prefer to see it as 'Kingdom Building' as

we were seeing people's lives changed and transformed as they came to know Christ's love for themselves. Sometimes the miraculous happened in an instant and sometimes it happened over time, but in all God blessed the growth of his Kingdom.

The concept of 'Business as Mission' can be applied to any situation anywhere. It can be a life mindset to witness wherever we do business or have contact with others. When I visit a business in Nepal, the owner has a small shrine in their shop and every day will do their devotion to their chosen Hindu god. Shopkeepers will always give thanks for their first customer every day by gesturing in devotion to their god. They have an integrated approach, bringing the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical together in the way they live their lives.

Due to equality laws or sensitivities about cross cultural issues in western cultures, the spiritual has been removed from many daily activities, allowing drift from naturally bringing God into the situation.

So do we carry on with business as usual or do we change our mindsets to see that whatever 'business' we are involved in, it can be a mission opportunity to do small things that God will bless?

Twenty nine years ago I had to search a river bed for sand and gravel for making concrete. In a little village I talked to a few

people and as I went I prayed for the area. Recently I met a young man from that village who was not born when I prayed there. He told me there was a thriving fellowship and that he was in Ministry himself. The grace of God at work again through answered prayer!

I have for many years been involved in business in Nepal, but we can all be involved and make 'Business as Mission' business as usual.



Mark with colleagues at work in the Mai River tunnel.



Mark preaching at a church outside Butwal.



Mark and his wife Ali with graduates from the Butwal Vocational Training Unit.



At the presentation are, from left: Charlie McCartney, the Rev Dr Paul Reid, Jim Leslie, the Rev Ian Magowan, John Hughes and John Howard

George Cross presentation

An RUC George Cross has been presented to St Saviour's, Connor, in recognition of all those who served the community from Kells Police Station.

The police station has now closed, and the presentation was made to St Saviour's during the annual Remembrance Service for the Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish Regiment.

Mr Stephen Montgomery, Deputy Lieutenant of Co Antrim, attended the service, as did other council leaders from across Co Antrim.

The presentation was made by Mr James Leslie Ex RUC GC. The preacher was the rector of St Saviour's, the Rev Ian Magowan who was assisted by the Rev Dr Paul Reid.

Elizabeth's 50 years on Select Vestry

Elizabeth Hill MBE completed 50 years' service on the Select Vestry of Magheragall Parish Church, and was promptly re-elected for a 51st year!

As Elizabeth reached 50 years on the Select Vestry just before her 90th birthday, both milestones were celebrated at the Annual General Vestry when the rector, the Rev Nicholas Dark, presented her with a cake and a print of the church.

In 2008, Elizabeth's was awarded an MBE for voluntary services to the community. Her 50 years' service on the Select Vestry have included nine years as Honorary Secretary and 24 years as Honorary Treasurer.

The rector thanked Elizabeth for her dedicated service to the parish and expressed his appreciation that the Vestry would have the benefit of her wisdom and insight for a 51st year.

Dean visits Focolare movement in Rome

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, travelled to Rome in March along with his wife Helen at the invitation of Dr Maria Voce, President of the Focolare movement.

At St Peter's Basilica they witnessed the preparations for the election of the Pope, before visiting the Anglican Centre, founded in 1966.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has described the Centre as 'a focus for creative encounter between Anglicans and Roman Catholics and a major resource for Anglicans of very varied background and conviction.'

John and Helen were welcomed by Canon David Richardson, Director of the Centre and shared in a service of Holy Communion.

The centre of the worldwide Focolare movement is sited in the hills of Frascati, south of Rome, and the following day John and Helen toured the Focolare complex and had an hour-long meeting with Dr Voce, who was a guest speaker in St Anne's Cathedral last June.

The following day they travelled by high speed train to Loppiano, a village in Tuscany where the entire community lives

on Focolare principles. There is a small university, cultural centres and artistic units. "Here we shared experiences and spoke to many people who were temporally or permanently sharing the community life of this place," said John.

That evening they were entertained by Sally McAllister who left the New Lodge in the early 1970s to become a Focolarine, and for more than 20 years was secretary to Cardinal Basil Hume, the Archbishop of Westminster.

John and Helen visited the business park of the Focolare, which is worked on principles described as 'The Economy of Communion.'

"This philosophy has produced a most amazing effect on a range of businesses, working together, supporting one another, making money and supporting the poor and all in need," said the Dean. "The fact that this whole community from business park to University, from farms to its places of hospitality, works on the principle of selfless giving is inspirational."

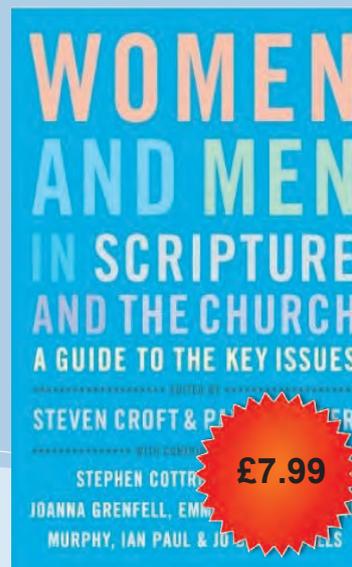
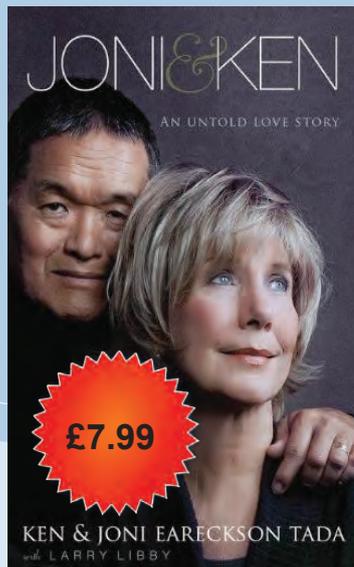
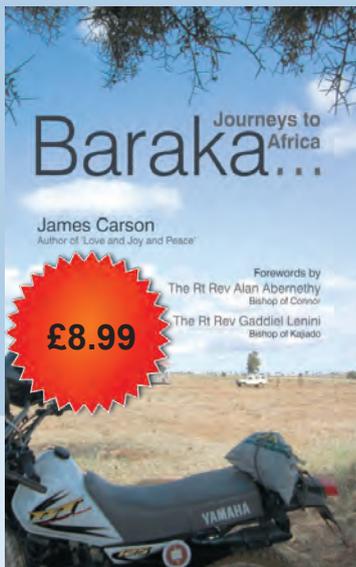
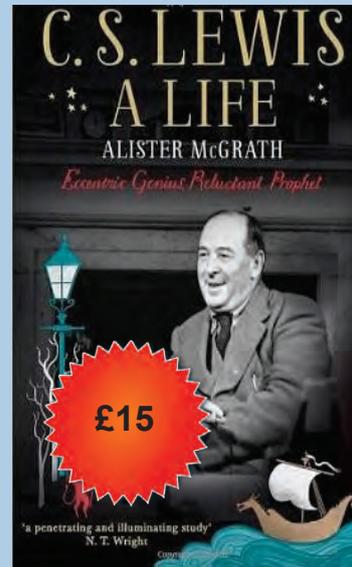
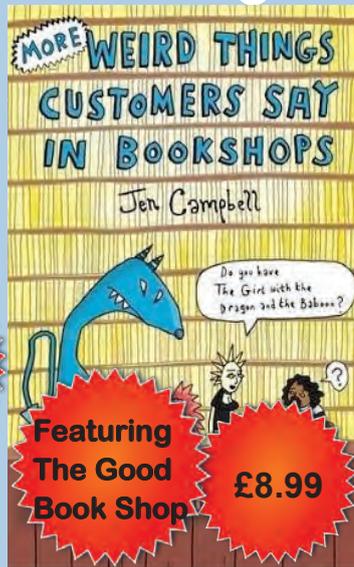
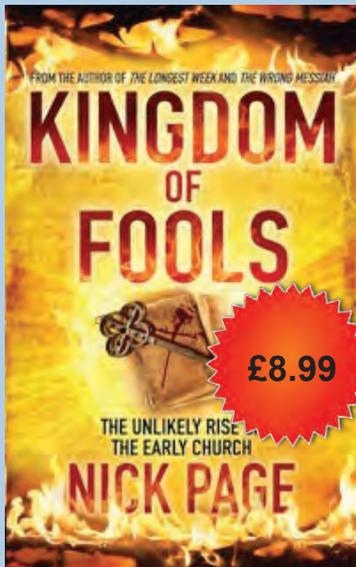


A community event and fundraiser was held at Derryvolgie Parish church on Saturday February 9. Organised by the parish events committee, the morning's activities raised £1,250. Gill Spence is pictured serving a fry up to the Rev Stephen McElhinney, his wife Cathy, and their daughter Ruby. Picture by John Kelly.

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