

CONNOR

connections

Connor
Diocese
restructuring
pages 4-5





Ray Elwood, artist and tutor and a member of the Ulster Watercolour Society, came along to St Anne's Cathedral to do a charcoal picture of the Black Santa Sit-out for display at his club, Dundonald Art Club, and chose the Rev Canon Mark Taylor, rector of Whitehead and Islandmagee, as his subject!

40th Black Santa raises a record sum

The Black Santa tradition at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, this year marked its 40th anniversary, with the annual sit-out raising a record £235,000 for charity!

The money was passed on to around 200 charities, mainly based in Northern Ireland, at the Good Samaritans Service in the Cathedral on February 5, when the special guests were Dame Mary Peters and entertainer George Jones.

The large sum raised was a fantastic acknowledgement that, even after four decades, Black Santa continues to inspire people to dig deep to help others.

Money was donated in the usual manner, deposited by the public into the barrel on the Cathedral steps during the period of the sit-out. Funds were also donated by post and online through the Black Santa Just Giving site.

This year's sit-out began at 10am on Friday, December 16, and the Dean was joined for the first 'shift' by Methodist Minister the Rev Canon Ruth Patterson, and Dean's Vicar, the Rev Canon Mark Niblock. Over the course of the sit-out



Black Santa, Dean John Mann, left, with the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alderman Brian Kingston, the Rev Canon Ruth Patterson, Ecumenical Canon, and the Rev Canon Mark Niblock, Dean's Vicar, on the first day of the 40th anniversary sit-out for charity.

Dean Mann was kept company on the steps by Canons and clergy of the Cathedral, with the Bishop of Connor dressing warmly for his morning stint.

One of the early callers on day one was the city's first citizen, Lord Mayor of Belfast Alderman Brian Kingston. The sit-out continued until late in the day on Christmas

Eve, with money donated in sums both large and small.

In his daily 'Black Santa Diary,' published in the Belfast Telegraph, Dean Mann reported that one man had dropped in £500, another couple donated their winter fuel allowance, and a bus driver had managed what the Dean described as 'an incredible feat,' scrunching a fiver into a ball and hurling it from the window of his bus on the other side of the road, straight into Black Santa's hand!

The Black Santa tradition was established by Dean Sammy Crooks who, after his installation as Dean in 1970 set about raising major funding to complete the Cathedral, a project that had been on-going since 1899.

The 'Dean's Sit-out' has become a major part of the Christmas tradition in Northern Ireland. Dean Crooks was dubbed Black Santa by the media and community because of his black Anglican cloak.

He was awarded the OBE in 1981, chiefly for his services to charity. Sadly, soon after his retirement, Dean Crooks died in a road accident. He is commemorated in a Blue Plaque outside St Anne's.

The tradition he started was maintained by his successor Dean Jack Shearer, and later by Dean Houston McKelvey before it passed to the current Dean.

Dean Mann said the full amount raised since that first sit-out in 1976 isn't known. "We can hazard a pretty good estimation, but the overall sums raised have not been the prime object. That, very firmly, lies in the good that whatever is given is put to by the charities concerned," Dean Mann said.

"We remember that whatever is raised, little or great, it will benefit someone, somewhere, who would be the poorer but for this great St Anne's and Belfast tradition. The generosity of the people who give to this fund, from Belfast and beyond, never ceases to hearten and amaze me," the Dean added.

Church of the Resurrection marks 50 years of ministry

On October 14, the Church of the Resurrection at Queen's University marked 50 years since its dedication in 1966.

Built as a student chapel close to the centre of the booming university campus, the 'Church of the Res' quickly became a thriving hub of worship and outreach. When it opened, it was adjacent to the Church of Ireland Centre, where the then chaplain, the Rev Cecil Kerr, led a group of around 15 students living in community.

Today, 50 students now make up the Church of Ireland &

Methodist Chaplaincy – and the Church of the Resurrection remains the beating heart of its mission on campus.

On October 14 the church hosted a service of thanksgiving to mark this anniversary, when friends and former students joined in celebration of half a century of ministry.

The current chaplain, the Rev Barry Forde, said it was a wonderful chance to join together with so many people who had been involved in the life and worship of the chapel since it opened in the 1960s.

Spring 2017

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Cover photo:

Young people at Engage Connor Youth's Reveal event held in Carrickfergus YMCA. Find out more about what our young people are up to on pages 8-9.



Please contact us if you would like to contribute to the next issue of Connor Connections.

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Please continue to pray for peace

The shooting of a police officer in north Belfast in January was a wholly unjustifiable and appalling act. There can be no excuse for any attack on members of the PSNI and they deserve our support as they carry out their duties on behalf of the whole community. Please pray for all those who serve the community and particularly for the officer and his family.

As we face another election please pray for all involved as we look to the future and continue to pray for peace. It is also important we exercise our right to vote.

This year's Lent Course will seek to focus our thoughts and prayers for the creation of which we have been made stewards. We have to find way of preserving the

environment and one of the issues presently in the media is the problem of plastic and the damage it is causing to the oceans.

There is much we can all do to help protect and nurture the amazing wonder of the created order.

Elsewhere in this edition there are details on the changes in our diocesan administration. This has been a difficult journey for all the staff and I am grateful to them for their patience and support. The details of who to contact are also available on the website. Please pray for this period of transition and change.

+ Alan Connor

New centenarians!

The Bishop of Connor had several parties to attend in January, with no less than three Connor parishioners celebrating their 100th birthdays!

Mr Bertie McNeill, a parishioner of the Church of the Holy Name, Greenisland, turned 100 on January 4. Bertie lives at Abbeyfield House where he celebrated his birthday with family and friends including Bishop Alan Abernethy and Bertie's rector, the Rev Paul Lyons.

Bertie was predeceased by his wife Irene more than 25 years ago. He has four children and prior to his retirement worked as an engineer at York Road train station.

Mrs Stella McMillan from Carnmoney Parish celebrated her 100th birthday on January 24, and Bishop Alan called in to see her along with Stella's vicar, the Rev Mercia Malcolm.

Stella was predeceased by her husband Jim, and now lives in Ashwood House Nursing Home. She was a Sunday School leader for more than 40 years, and worked in McMillan's Newsagents in Glengormley.

A happy 100th birthday too to Miss Sarah Jefferson, a lifelong parishioner of Christ Church, Lisburn, who celebrated with a



Bishop Alan popped in to wish Miss Sarah Jefferson a happy 100th birthday.



Mrs Stella McMillan was delighted to receive a card from The Queen on her 100th birthday.

party for family and friends on January 25.

Sarah grew up on the Low Road in Lisburn, and was baptised in Christ Church. She attended the Nicholson Memorial School, a church school then run by the parish.

She worked with Stewart's Mill and later with Barbour Threads, Sarah now lives in El Shammah Residential Home in Lisburn.

Many congratulations to all Connor Diocese's newest centenarians!



Bishop Alan and the Rev Paul Lyons with Mr Bertie McNeill on his 100th birthday.

Historic gift donated

A gift of the private communion chalice and paten of Canon Richard Irvine DD, dating to 1866, was presented to St Anne's Cathedral on November 30.

Canon Irvine was ordained in 1861, and was curate of Glenavy; St George's and then Christ Church, Belfast, before spending 34 years as rector of St Stephen's, Belfast, until his death in 1903. He was Prebendary of Rasharkin in the Chapter of St Saviour.

The chalice and paten were given to Canon Irvine on February 8 1866 – with a hundred sovereigns – by the congregation of St George's. At some stage it is thought these items may have been returned to St George's and were given to Canon Noel Shortt, PhD, a former Canon of St Anne's.

Mrs Evelyn Shortt presented this gift which will be on display with the other silver treasures of the Cathedral.

Ian to retire after 34 years at St Anne's

Mr Ian Barber, pictured, who has been Organist at St Anne's Cathedral for 34 years, is to retire in August.



Following the announcement in January, the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann said: "The organ of St Anne's Cathedral has had a relatively small number of regular players over the 110 years that it has been in existence. To be reminded that Ian has graced it for almost a third of that time is to recognise a staggering achievement in itself."

Ian was made an Associate of the Royal School of Church Music in October 2014 in recognition of more than three decades at the organ in St Anne's.

The Cathedral's Master of the Choristers David Stevens said: "The music department has undergone a number of changes in the past few years, yet Ian's organ playing, generosity of time and friendly encouragement have been constant and very much appreciated."

St Anne's Cathedral's new chamber organ was dedicated and named The Barber Organ in honour of Ian in 2014.



Team Connor: Standing, from left: Karen Bushby, Communications Officer; Trevor Douglas, Development Officer; Aurdal Irvine, Synod and Committees Officer; Christina Baillie, Youth Officer; Elaine Wright, Clerical Assistant; Stephen Whitten, Church Army Evangelist; Karen Webb, Church Army Lead Evangelist; Richard Cotter, Finance and Administration Manager and Helen Conville, Clerical Assistant / Receptionist. Seated are the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and Mrs Rosemary Patterson, Bishop's PA. Children's Officer Jill Hamilton and Margaret Treanor, Clerical Assistant / Receptionist were not available for the photograph.

Team now in place after restructuring

Major changes have taken place in the administration of the Diocese of Connor, and as part of this restructuring the dioceses of Connor and Down & Dromore are now being administered separately.

Speaking at Connor Synod in September, Bishop Alan Abernethy said this had been a journey that began many months previously with a major review of diocesan administration in the two dioceses.

He acknowledged that it had been a difficult time for staff, the staff committee representing the joint committee and the bishops. The formal process was carefully guided by the diocesan solicitor and had expert human resource support.

The new structure was put into place at the beginning of 2017, and now each diocese has its own administrative structure and staff, working directly to the bishop.

Bishop Alan said these new support structures will:

- Allow each diocese to develop its own priorities and to respond quickly to changing circumstances and issues that arise;
- Enable clear lines of responsibility and clarity around management and avoid complicated and time consuming decision making;
- Integrate mission, ministry and support for parishes;
- Ensure better stewardship of limited resources and reduce the financial impact on parishes;
- Help create a clear focus and identity for each diocese.

Bishop Alan expressed thanks to all who

had helped in the restructuring process.

The new diocesan team is in place, with administration to be headed by Finance and Administration Manager Richard Cotter, (see opposite page). Aurdal Irvine, who has worked for the Joint Committee in an admin role for 30 years is now Connor's Synod and Committees Officer, and Elaine Wright, a secretary for the Joint Committee for 25 years, takes on the role of Clerical Assistant for Connor. Mrs Rosemary Patterson continues to serve the Bishop of Connor as his Personal Assistant, and Mrs Helen Conville, who has worked for the Joint Committee for 21 years, most recently in accounts, is now in a jobshare post of Clerical Assistant with reception duties with Mrs Margaret Treanor, a new member of staff.

The remainder of the Connor team is unchanged: Diocesan Development Officer is Trevor Douglas; Communications Officer is Karen Bushby; Children's Officer is Jill Hamilton; Youth Officer is Christina Baillie and Church Army Evangelists/North Belfast Centre of Mission are Karen Webb and Stephen Whitten.

The offices in Church House have been reorganised, with Connor Diocese occupying the first floor, Down & Dromore Diocese on the second floor and RB staff including the Press Office, Board of Education and Safeguarding Trust on the third floor.

'I took opportunity to answer God's call'

Mr Richard Cotter will be joining the Connor team in the newly created post of Finance and Administration Manager.

As well as having responsibility for accounting and financial services, Richard will also advise parishes on financial matters and enable the collection of parish financial assessments.

Richard will line manage the Synods and Committees Officer, Clerical Assistant and Clerical Assistant with reception duties.

Born and bred in Cullybackey, Richard is a former pupil of Ballymena Academy. He has an Honours Degree in Business Studies from the University of Abertay, Dundee, and for the past 21 years has worked as a finance manager for All-Route Shipping NI Ltd, a Woodside Group company that specialises in freight forwarding and packing.

He holds a certificate level professional accountancy qualification from the ACCA accounting body, and a level 7 certificate from CMI (Chartered Managers Institute).

Richard is a Church Warden in St Patrick's Parish, Ballymena. He enjoys travel and has visited exotic places ranging from China to Alaska and Barbados to Brunei.

Richard is married to Andrea who he said

is responsible for bringing him into the Church of Ireland fold.

"What attracted me to this post was I believe the will of God," Richard said. "I had been earnestly praying and looking for God's answer to be on the finance committee of St Patrick's and just at that time was made aware of this job opportunity.

"Andrea, having read the job spec, kindly pointed out to me that I do all this in my daily work routines. As much as I love my current work place I took the opportunity to answer God's call to put my talents and expertise into practice within Connor Diocese."

Richard, who starts work in Church House full time on February 20, said he was looking forward to making new friendships with the Connor team and developing working partnerships with the parishes.

"I hope and pray that after all the reorganisation settles down that we as a team can bring a more professional and coordinated approach to dealing with diocesan affairs," he said.



Mr Richard Cotter, Connor Finance and Administration Officer, above, and, inset, Mrs Margaret Treanor who joins the Connor team as part-time Clerical Assistant / Receptionist. Margaret was a volunteer with the charity Cancer Lifeline, having taken early retirement from her position as a HR manager in the NHS.



Pictured at the installation of Canons of St Anne's Cathedral are, from left: The Rev Canon Gareth Harron, the Rev Canon Mark Niblock (Dean's Vicar); the Rev Canon David Humphries and the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann. Photo: Ron Elsdon

Installation of three Canons in St Anne's

Three new Canons were installed in St Anne's Cathedral on Sunday January 8.

They were the Rev Canon Mark Niblock, Dean's Vicar at St Anne's; the Rev Canon David Humphries, rector of Kilbride; and the Rev Canon Gareth Harron, rector of Hollywood.

Mark and David were each appointed a Canon of the Cathedral by the Bishop of Connor and Gareth was appointed by the Bishop of Down and Dromore.

Mark was formerly Priest-in-Charge of St Colmgall's, Rathcoole Parish, and prior to that was curate assistant in Agherton Parish, Portstewart. He was appointed Dean's Vicar at St Anne's in April 2016.

David was a previously a Canon of St Anne's for the Diocese of Down and Dromore, and after his move to Connor (he was instituted as rector of Kilbride on November 8) he was appointed a Canon for Connor Diocese.

David's first curacy was in Ballyholme where he remained for four years until his appointment as Vicar Chorale at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. After three years David moved to St Molua's, Stormont, where he was rector for 23 years.

Gareth was ordained deacon in 1995 for the curacy of Willowfield in Down Diocese. He served a second curacy in the Cathedral Parish of Dromore before becoming rector of Magheralin.

Combined confirmation service

Magheragall Parish Church hosted a combined Confirmation Service on Sunday November 27.

There were four candidates from Ballinderry, five from Derryvolgie and 17 from Magheragall. More than 220 people attended the service.



Outside the shop in Greenisland Parish car park are, from left: Trevor Eccles, David Beattie, the Rev Paul Lyons and Tony Jones.

Shop changes lives at home and in Africa

A purpose built shop unit in the car park of Greenisland Parish Church is having a big impact on lives of people at home and in Africa.

African Child Ministries has sold groceries to the public at reduced prices at a stall in the parish car park and from a shop in Carrickfergus for many years.

But since May 2015, the charity has been based in the new shop built as an extension to Greenisland Parish Hall. All profits from the business go directly to the Masai area of Kenya, a place very close to the heart of Tony Jones, one of the men behind the venture.

In 2004 parishioner Tony took part in the Walk of a Thousand Men in Kenya. "I was touched by the lives of the people there, especially the children," he said. "They had nothing. When I came home I struggled just going into the supermarket and seeing the choice that we have."

Tony talked to members of the Greenisland Evangelist Association, among them Trevor Eccles. As a consequence the men set up a stall selling fruit, vegetables and non-perishable items in the parish car park.

Three years later they branched out into bigger, full time premises in Carrickfergus. Now the move to the purpose built unit at 'home' in Greenisland means costs are reduced and profits have risen.

Money raised is sent to Narok in Kenya. Over the years it has been used to help



Tony Jones in the Greenisland shop.

the homeless, run a feeding programme, extend a nursery school and install solar lights in mud huts. The charity provided the local Masai minister with a motorbike, so he can go and teach in local schools.

The stall highlighted another need – here in Northern Ireland. "We realised that this outreach is also important at home. People come and share with us and even ask us to pray for them," Tony said.

The new shop sells everything edible from fresh meat to tinned beans. Trevor has links with many businesses and wholesalers who provide surplus in date food for African Child Ministries to sell.

"Everything in the shop is 30-35 per cent cheaper than you would pay in the supermarkets," Trevor said. Items fly off the shelves so quickly that the shop has to be restocked up to four times a day, and it has 150-200 customers daily.

Tony said the people of Greenisland had been very supportive and so the charity can continue to send money out to Gary and Mary, two missionaries from Randalstown, who ensure it is used properly. Over the years more than £100,000 has been sent to Africa.

The charity has now purchased 42.5 acres of land for the construction of a special centre for disabled children.

"This will give disabled children somewhere to go," Tony said. "My son Daniel, who is 23, is disabled. When I was out there I saw a young man aged about 16 and I knew immediately he had cerebral palsy. He was crawling on the ground, he had nowhere to sit. In Kenya, children like that are sometimes left to die."

The charity recently sent a container loaded with wheelchairs and other equipment suitable for people with disabilities to Kenya, all donated by Leckey, Lisburn. "When the children see it their eyes will pop out of their heads!" Tony said.

The Greenisland shop is staffed mainly by volunteers, including young people doing their Duke of Edinburgh Award, and the charity also works with the Probation Board offering work opportunities for people doing community service.

The Rev Paul Lyons, rector of Greenisland, said: "Through living out their Christian faith, Tony and Trevor show a great love for the community. Trevor has the business background and Tony has the passion and people skills and together they are an amazing team. People from church and community have gathered behind them. We hear stories of lives being changed through the shop."

He said the shop was the hub of the community, a place where customers would find not only food at good prices, but 'craic and banter, chat and friendship.'

Angela Campbell is a regular customer. "I am in here every day," she said. "It is a win, win situation, customers are getting a bargain and the profits are going to a good cause. We always have a good laugh, it is such a bonus for the community."



The Rev Andrew Ker with President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, Dr Ian Adamson OBE and Mr Robert Williamson, Dalaradia Group, outside St John's Parish Church, Donegore.

Irish President pays visit to Donegore

The President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, realised a long held ambition when he visited St John's Church, Donegore, on October 27 to see the grave of Irish poet Sir Samuel Ferguson.

Later, at the studio of stained glass artist David Esler, he was shown a window crafted by members of the Dalaradia Group, a community organisation of men who wish to make a positive and peaceful commitment to conflict transformation.

The same group had voluntarily tidied up the St John's graveyard, including Sir Samuel Ferguson's grave, and cleaned all the windows in the 200-year-old church.

President Higgins was met at the gates of St John's by the Rev Andrew Ker, Mr Robert Williamson, chairman of Dalaradia, and Dr Ian Adamson OBE, a former Lord Mayor of Belfast and the city's first Honorary Historian.

Among the guests were the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; Connor Diocesan Development Officer Trevor Douglas, and members of the Dalaradia Group.

They were welcomed by Mr Ker, and there were speeches by Mr Williamson, and by President Higgins who spoke of the 'profound and inspiring legacy' of Sir Samuel Ferguson.

"I am delighted and honoured to visit such a beautiful church," the President said. "I remember studying Sir Samuel Ferguson and his work, and have been talking for years about wanting to visit his resting place."

Guests were entertained with music

played on the Mountain Dulcimer by Paul Atcheson-Blair from the Dalaradia Group.

Mr Ker gave the President a short tour of St John's, showing him the war memorial crafted from ceramic poppies used in the Tower of London WW1 centenary display, and the unusual Donegore Parish Roll of Honour, written in 1916, half way through the war!

At the graveside, Dr Adamson reflected on Sir Samuel's express desire to be laid to rest in Donegore, and the Bishop of Connor said a prayer of thanksgiving for literature, culture and for writers.

Sir Samuel Ferguson was born in Belfast in 1810 and studied law at Trinity College, Dublin. His works include 'Lays of the Western Gael,' 'Congal' and 'Poems.' He was President of the Royal Irish Academy.

He died in August 1886 and following a service in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, "...all that was mortal of Sir Samuel Ferguson was conveyed to the family burying-ground in the county of Antrim. The procession to Donegore was accompanied by the Bishop of the diocese... Here, at the grave, the service was completed by the Bishop, his old and faithful friend William Reeves, in 'hope of the resurrection to eternal life,' and the spot is marked by a simple tablet."

- Extract from 'Sir Samuel Ferguson in the Ireland of his day' by Lady Ferguson published in 1896.

Dean John Mann to leave Cathedral

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, announced on February 5 that he will be leaving St Anne's Cathedral at Easter to take up the post of team rector of the Parish of Swanage with Studland in the Diocese of Salisbury.

Dean Mann, who was born in Blackheath, London, has served in four parishes in the Church of Ireland, as well as St Anne's Cathedral.

He said the Cathedral Quarter was moving into a phase of significant change. "St Anne's will rise to the opportunities and challenges that will face a new Dean and the Cathedral Board over the next five years," Dean Mann said. "It is from this perspective a good time to go."

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, said: "I will be forever grateful for John's ministry in St Anne's, for his prayerful presence. His clear thinking and compassionate care for many will leave the Cathedral in good heart."

Stanley collects MBE



St Anne's Cathedral parishioner Stanley McLroy, aged 92, was at Buckingham Palace on December 6 with his wife Noreen to receive an MBE from Prince William.

Stanley received the award for charitable services. In almost 60 years of dedicated fundraising, he and Noreen have raised more than £1million for charity, primarily for Cancer Research UK.

New book on history of St George's, Belfast

The Select Vestry of St George's Parish Church, High Street, Belfast, and the Trustees of the Ulster Historical Foundation launched a new book on the history of St George's on December 8.

The book, sub headed 'Two Centuries of Faith, Worship and Music,' is written by Prof Brian Walker. Prof Walker, from Queen's University, spoke at the well-attended launch, along with Fintan Mullan of the Ulster Historical Foundation. The St George's Choir provided the music.



Archdeacon Jack Patterson after celebrating Holy Communion with the Rev Stephen Fielding.

Archdeacon Jack's 50th anniversary

Archdeacon Jack Patterson celebrated a mid-week Holy Communion Service in Agherton Parish Church to mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. He was assisted by the rector of Agherton, the Rev Stephen Fielding.

Jack was made deacon on June 27 1965 by the Rt Rev RCH Elliot DD, Bishop of Connor, in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, and on St Peter's Day 1966 he was ordained priest in Christ Church, Lisburn.

From 1965-68, Jack served as curate-assistant in St Paul's, Belfast, and then as senior curate in Larne and Inver with special responsibility for All Saints', Craigahill, from 1968-72.

In 1972 he was appointed rector of Ballintoy with Rathlin Island, to which Dunseverick Parish was added in 1978, and remained rector until his retirement in 2005. In 1997 Jack was made a canon of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, and became Archdeacon of Dalriada in 2001.

All of his almost 40 years in the ordained ministry was served in the Diocese of Connor. On retirement in 2005 Jack and his wife Frances moved a few miles west from Ballintoy Rectory and became parishioners of Agherton.

Silent retreats

The Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer, Ireland, has organised two retreats at The Church of Ireland Theological Institute in Dublin. The Witness will be Carol Casey.

These take place from June 16 - June 18, and June 19 - June 21. Members of churches, lay and ordained, are welcome to attend these retreats. Silence is observed throughout most of the Retreats.

For information, contact the Rev J Leslie Crampton, Tel: 00 353-9232589 or email: cramptonjl41@gmail.com.

Getting set for the Big Connor Contest!

For a second year, Connor Youth Council is running a competitive sports tournament for young people from across the Diocese.

As well as various sporting activities there will be an 'Escape the Room' challenge. Chill out space will also be available for young people to catch their breath in between the sporting challenges.

Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer, said: "This event is a great opportunity for various groups of young people in our parishes to get involved with the diocesan programme. It will be a really accessible, fun event which would welcome young people from uniformed organisations, small

groups or youth programmes. Why not gather a few young people and enter a team?"

The Big Connor Contest takes place on Saturday February 25 from 3pm to 8pm in St Aidan's Parish Halls, Glenavy. It is for young people aged 11-18 and participation fee is £5 per young person which includes all activities and dinner.

For further information, please contact Christina Baillie on 07753 312405 or christina@connor.anglican.org.



Having fun at the Christmas EVENT in Antrim.

Festive fun for at Christmas EVENT

From paper snowball fights to dramatic performances and festive food, the Connor Diocesan Youth Christmas Party on Saturday December 5 had it all!

The evening was organised by the Connor Youth Council and attracted almost 100 young people from parishes across Connor. Council members performed a drama to convey the message of Christmas and how God's son was born as a baby even among the chaos.

The young people enjoyed Christmas dinner, served on a stick, followed by Eton Mess for dessert!

Groups attended from Drumtullagh, Armo

& Loughguile; Ahoghill & Portglenone; All Saints', Antrim; Skerry, Rathcavan & Newtowncrommelin (Broughshane); St Stephen's, St Luke's & St Michael's, Belfast; Lisburn Cathedral; Glenavy; Ballymena; Church of the Resurrection; Derryvolgie

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "A massive thank you to all the Youth Council for organising the event. We had an incredible time celebrating together and connecting young people across the whole diocese. Connor Youth Council would like to thank All Saints', Antrim for hosting us and all the leaders across the diocese for bringing their groups along."



This year's Reveal event was held in Carrickfergus YMCA and there were plenty of activities for the young people to get stuck into.

Youth Forum is launched at Reveal

Connor Youth Council hosted Reveal on October 1, another fantastic event which included the launch of the Connor Youth Forum.

A fabulous selection of games was organised by Catherine from St George's Parish and Sharon from Church of the Resurrection, allowing the young people to get to know one another and share lots of laughs!

The event took place in Carrickfergus YMCA where the young people ate pizza together and enjoyed the energetic games.

After the launch of the Connor Youth Forum, a few members were interviewed about why they had signed up. They said they hoped the Youth Forum could be an opportunity to involve young people from across the diocese and to influence the wider church from a young person's perspective.

Katie, from Lisburn Cathedral, said the Youth Forum provided an "opportunity

to get to know other young people in the diocese" and the aim of Youth Forum would be to "allow young people in the diocese to have a voice."

When asked what she valued about diocesan events, Catherine from Church of the Resurrection said: "It's great to come and meet other people."

Sara from Lisburn Cathedral said she got involved with Youth Forum as she 'enjoyed coming to these events and made a lot of friends.' Sara explained that everyone aged 15 and over can come and sit on Youth Forum, with two representatives from each parish.

Any young person interested in getting involved with Youth Forum is asked to contact Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie on christina@connor.anglican.org.

Philip steps up as Youth Council chair

The Rev Philip Benson, curate at Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo, is taking on the role of Chair of the Engage Connor Youth Council.

He takes over from Sharon Hamill from Church of the Resurrection who co-chaired the Youth Council in 2015 with Zara Genoe and has chaired the Council through 2016.

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie

said: "Sharon has led the Youth Council through several events, prayerfully planning and engaging with young people across the diocese."

She added: "The Youth Council would like to say a massive thank you on behalf of all the young people across Connor to Sharon for all she has done, and in addition welcome Philip to this new role from 2017."

Great line-up of events for 2017

Engage Connor Youth Council is looking forward to a busy and eventful 2017.

The Youth Council seeks to connect with and support young people across the diocese through a programme of events to engage them with faith, friendship and service.

All events are for those aged 11-18 who are linked with parishes in Connor Diocese.

The year will kick off with **the Big Connor Contest** in February (see opposite page).

Young people who are involved in the **Youth Forum** will host an event on March 25 with sessions and opportunities to discuss topics of faith and living as a Christian young person.

This year, the Council is introducing a new event called **The Third Level** which aims to share with some older young people in terms of options and thinking following school. This takes place at the Dock Café on April 30.

The **Connor Sub Camp** will be returning with food provided for groups attending Summer Madness, and immediately after the annual youth camp in Glenarm, Engage Connor Youth will be running the third **Streetreach** from July 4-7 which is an opportunity for the young people to experience mission.

The **Connor Takes the Castle** weekend, always a stand-out event, returns to Castlewellan from September 8-10, which the 2017 **Christmas Event** will provide a chance to do some outreach around the Ballymena area, followed by a big Christmas party.

The Youth Council is also supporting:

- St Patrick's Day Event, March 17-18 in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.
- Equipped Training, May 6 in Drummaul Parish, Randalstown.
- Global Outreach Day, May 27.

Connor Youth Forum Facebook page

Connor Youth Forum has launched a dedicated Facebook page which can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/ConnorYouthForum>.

The young people will update this themselves, sharing information and events.



At the institution of the Rev Arthur Young in St Paul's, Lisburn, are, from left: Roy Robinson, People's Warden; the Rev Nicholas Dark, Rural Dean; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Rev Arthur Young; the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor; the Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain; the Rev Trevor Stevenson, preacher and Stanley Gamble, Rector's Warden. Photo: Norman Briggs

New faces in parishes across the diocese

There have been a number of changes in incumbencies in parishes across Connor Diocese in recent months.

The Rev Campbell Dixon MBE was introduced as Priest-in-Charge of St Mark's Parish Church, Ballysillan, on October 9.

Campbell, who is married to Jacqui, was a member of the clergy team at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, for almost five years, where his work focused on pastoral ministry and on administration.

Campbell grew up in the Ballymena area and was a member of Ballyscullion Parish. He studied Personnel and Human Resource Management at the University of Ulster, and has a Master's Degree in Human Resource Management.

He worked with the police service for 33 years before training for ordination at the Church of Ireland Theological College, and

was curate in St Patrick's, Jordanstown, before his appointment to St Anne's. Campbell said: "St Mark's will be a new challenge. I am looking forward to working with parishioners and to taking the parish forward in the next chapter of its history."

The institution of the **Rev Edmond (Eddie) Coulter** as rector of Lambeg Parish Church took place on October 13. Preacher at the service was the Rt Rev Ferran Glenfield, Bishop of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh.

Eddie grew up in Lisburn and was a member of Lisburn Cathedral when called to ordination in 1984. He did his training at the Church of Ireland Theological College in Dublin and in 1987 was ordained in Connor

Diocese. He served his first curacy in Ballymena and his second in Knockbreda, Diocese of Down and Dromore.

In 1992 Eddie returned to Connor as rector of Upper Falls and in 1997 moved to Milltown Parish in Armagh Diocese where he remained as rector until 2003 when he moved to Dublin as Superintendent of Irish Church Missions and senior pastor of Immanuel Church. Eddie is married to Hazel, and they have three children.

The Rev Arthur Young, formerly rector of Kill o' the Grange Parish, Diocese of Dublin, was instituted as rector of St Paul's Parish, Lisburn, on October 20. Preacher was the Rev Trevor Stevenson.

Arthur was born in Bangor and was an apprentice cabinet maker for three years before working in management in the DIY trade. He studied at Belfast Bible College, completing a degree through Liverpool University, and later moved to England where he was a youth worker with churches in both Leeds and London.

He studied for ordination at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute and was ordained in 2001. He was curate assistant in Donaghadee for three years, before being appointed rector of All Saints', Tullylish, Diocese of Down and Dromore, where he remained for nine years until his appointment to Kill o' the Grange in 2013.

The Rev Canon David Humphries was instituted as rector of Kilbride Parish at a service on November 8. The preacher at the service was the Rev Walter Laverty.

David is originally from Belfast. He attended Annadale Grammar School and Stranmillis College, and taught Music, RE and Remedial English at the Boys' Model School, Belfast, for five years.

He trained for ministry in Dublin and was ordained in 1986. His first curacy was



At the introduction of the Rev Campbell Dixon MBE as Priest-in-Charge of St Mark's, Ballysillan, are, from left: Dessie Thompson, Churchwarden; the Rev Janice Elsdon; the Rev Rachel Creighton, Rural Dean; the Rev Campbell Dixon MBE; the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; Archdeacon Jack Patterson; and Mr Jim Patterson, Churchwarden. Photo: George Briggs.

in Ballyholme with Canon Jack Mercer, where he remained for four years, until his appointment as Vicar Chorale at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. After three years at St Anne's David moved to St Molua's, Stormont, where he was rector for 23 years.

He was appointed as a Canon of St Anne's Cathedral by the Bishop of Down and Dromore four years ago, and on January 8 was installed as a Canon of the Cathedral for Connor Diocese.

David has been leading pilgrimages to the Holy Land every year for 23 years. He is also Chairperson of the Down & Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Scheme.

The Rev Andrew Ker was instituted as rector of Templepatrick and Donegore on December 1. Andrew is a former curate of St Brigid's, Mallusk, but has been Diocesan Curate with Special Responsibility for the parish since December 2013.

Andrew, who is married to Nuala and father to Kathryn, Michelle and Rachael, worked as a computer software engineer prior to his ordination in 2005.

The institution of **the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth** as rector of the United Parish of Ballynure and Ballyeaston, Ballyclare, took place on January 17 in St John's Church.

Jonny was previously curate in Jordanstown Parish. Brought up in Lisburn, he attended St Paul's Parish and later Lisburn Cathedral. He worked as Head of IT with a Northern Ireland-wide clothing firm, and his work took him to Coleraine where he worshipped in St Patrick's Parish.

Jonny was an IT consultant with the UK Government, and for 10 years commuted to England. It was during this time he felt the call to ministry.

Jonny was among the first intake on the new MTh course at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute. He was ordained a Deacon in September 2011 and did his internship in Holy Trinity Parish, Portrush. He served his first curacy in his home church of St Patrick's, Coleraine, and his second curacy in Jordanstown.

Jonny is married to Alison and they have two sons, Josh and Nathan. "Alison, myself and the boys are really looking forward to this new chapter. The sense of God's call to us is so tangible," Jonny said. "We will so miss the people of Jordanstown but are excited to develop new relationships in Ballyclare and Ballynure."



The Rev Eddie Coulter at his institution in Lambeg with his wife Hazel and son David. Photo: Norman Briggs.



The Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, rector of Ballynure and Ballyeaston, with his wife Alison and sons Josh and Nathan, at the service of institution on January 17.



At the service of institution in Kilbride are, from left: The Rev Canon Derek Kerr, Rural Dean; the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; the Rev Canon David Humphries; and the Rev Walter Laverty, preacher. Photo: David Holmes.

Demolition fun at Kids Big Adventure!

Children from across Connor Diocese had a fantastic time at the 2016 Kids Big Adventure Days, this year hosted by Ballymoney Parish on October 8 and Glenavy Parish on October 15.

The theme was 'The Big Demolition' and at both venues the children and their leaders enjoyed a rhythmic afternoon inspired by special guest James from Fun with Drums.

James led a warm up session and a workshop for each age group. The kids were great at keeping in time and following all James's instructions and showed themselves to be very rhythmic indeed – there are definitely a few future drummers in the making!

As well as Fun with Drums, Kids Big Adventure featured the usual mix of on stage songs drama and puppets. The drama this year told the story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho and some of the children volunteered to get dressed up in costumes to help bring the story to life.

They learned a very groovy dance song called 'God put rhythm in you,' with Aimee and Victoria from the Connor Children's Council teaching some cool moves!

As well as the on stage programme, the two adventure days featured a musical instrument-making workshop where the children crafted a range of drums, castanets and maracas.

Diocesan Children's Project Development Officer Jill Hamilton said: "Our huge thanks to Kasala Gilchrist and the team at Ballymoney who hosted us so brilliantly and took complete charge of the leaders' café."

Jill said both days had been a great success: "We are very grateful to all the leaders who organised groups, sorted out forms, booked buses and gave up



Enjoying some crafty fun at the Ballymoney Kids Big Adventure Day.

their Saturday afternoon to be with us and support the children in their group. We were delighted to have so many kids come along and a big thank you to all of you who did come and for joining in with so much enthusiasm."

She thanked Andrew Neill, children's and family worker at Glenavy (and Connor children's council member), for his behind the scenes organisation and for doing the sound and drama! Jill also thanked Andrew's team who came along to support the event.

Jill added: "Finally huge thanks to all the members of our Children's Council who give up their time so willingly and make eejits of themselves up front in order to touch the lives of our children and support all our wonderful Connor leaders. Your efforts are greatly appreciated!"

Full reports of the two Kids Big Adventure Days can be found on the Ripple Connor website: <http://www.rippleconnor.org.uk/>



Connor Children's Officer Jill Hamilton on stage at Lisburn Cathedral's Cracking Christmas Party.

Advent activities

Christmas is a special time for children, with many parishes putting on events during the Advent and Christmas period. On December 17 Lisburn Cathedral was transformed into a winter wonderland for the first 'Cracking Christmas Party.'

There were stalls to interest both kids and adults. The Rev Denise Acheson taught the meaning of a Christingle and helped the children make them.

Karen Webb (Connor Diocese/Church Army Evangelist) and Jill Hamilton (Connor Children's Project Development Officer) put on a puppet show and there were various crafts and a popular photo booth.

St Patrick's, Ballymena, hosted an Advent themed Messy Church with lots of advent related crafts and activities. During the celebration they took a closer look at the events leading up to Jesus' birth, and they finished with hotdogs and mince pies.

St Peter's in Belfast also hosted a Messy Church during Advent which attracted 16 children and their parents. Frank Dillon, parish children's worker, said: "We used the Advent Messy Church programme from the Ripple website for all the crafts and the overall theme, which worked out great!"

School Choir of the Year competition

The St Anne Trust, in conjunction with St Anne's Cathedral, will hold its first ever cross community School Choir of the Year competition in May.

The competition will be open to primary schools across the greater Belfast area with sections for Junior Choirs, Senior Choirs and Special School Choirs.

There will be places for 14 junior and senior choirs on May 10. Each choir will be asked to sing two pieces of the choir's own choice and one communal piece which all choirs will sing together on the day.

Entry forms are available at www.belfastcathedral.org.



Lots of action at the Kids Big Adventure Day in Glenavy.



Young people from various schools took part in the Habitat for Humanity cross community project refurbishing St Michael's Parish Halls.

Fresh lease of life for St Michael's halls

St Michael's Parish Hall off Belfast's Shankill Road has been given a new lease of life thanks to a partnership between the Lower Shankill Ministry Team and Habitat for Humanity Northern Ireland.

During October and November, Habitat volunteers helped to refurbish the parish hall. They included young people taking part in Habitat's cross-community ChangeMakers Programme which explores social justice and active citizenship with 16 to 18-year-olds.

Work was closely supervised by trained professionals and included cleaning, sanding, painting and basic construction.

Jenny Williams, Chief Executive of Habitat NI, said: "Since our founding in 1994, breaking down barriers between divided communities has been at the heart of our work. In our experience, when volunteers from different backgrounds engage in practical projects, like this one, meaningful relationships are developed based on understanding.

"We are very excited about this partnership with St Michael's Parish. When the leadership of the church committed to invest in improving their hall they focused not only on the building but on what could be achieved through the project. It is about much more than four walls and a roof; it is bringing people together to help build a strong, inclusive community."

Various activities, which will be open to people across west Belfast, will be hosted in the newly refurbished halls. These will include a life-skills course; a 'Dinner Time Drama' group for primary aged children;

and a social and sports group for older people.

The Rev Canon James Carson, Minister-in-Charge, said the newly refurbished halls would help realise the church's vision to serve the local community.

"Our hope is that this project will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of people of all ages, actively demonstrating God's love by bringing people together to build relationships and trust and restore hope," he said.

St Michael's parish halls were built around 1980.

Over the years they have become dated, and one of the largest rooms, the Moore Room, is an excellent space which hadn't been used for some time prior to the refurbishment.

Around 150 pupils from a total of 17 schools took part in the cross community project at St Michael's.

To learn more about Habitat's work visit habitatni.co.uk.

CAP Job Club opens

A new CAP Job Club opened in St Michael's Parish Hall on January 18. Members of St Michael's, St Stephen's & St Luke's Parishes are working in partnership with the Church Army to help people find work by offering free weekly workshops.

Job Club Manager Heather Carson will be leading the workshops.

"With more people facing long-term unemployment, there is a real need for a personal service which provides practical and emotional support for people to find work again. CAP Job Club is designed to do just this," Heather said.

"We hope that we can help people to gain the confidence and skills they need to find employment, particularly for those who may have been out of work for a long period of time."



Painting the walls of the Moore Room.

Parishes mark 'Giving Tuesday'

On 'Giving Tuesday,' celebrated following Thanksgiving Day and the shopping events of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the Parishes of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion delivered 117 'Handbags of Hope/Washbags for Men' to Ballymena Foodbank.

These were collected during the four weeks leading up to the First Sunday in Advent, and were brought to the front of the church by children on November 27, when Aurelia Kelly, wife of curate the Rev Trevor Kelly, did a talk on Acts of Kindness and made a supersize present with a key message.

A prayer followed thanking each person who made a donation and for each Foodbank client who would benefit.



The Rev Canon Derek Kerr, Vicar of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion, makes a delivery on behalf of the three parishes to Ballymena Foodbank.

Wedding Festival

The United Parish of Ballymoney, Finvoy & Rasharkin held a Wedding Dress Festival in St Patrick's Church, from Friday September 23 to Sunday September 25.

A stunning array of 67 bridal gowns was on display. The oldest dated from 1850 and 1873. There were a few grandmother/mother/daughter dresses on show.

The event was expertly styled by Velvet Ribbon. Visitors were able to view the dresses up close and enjoy the accompanying photographs. The ladies of the church served cream teas in the Old Schoolhouse.



Beautiful dresses on display in Ballymoney.



The Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor; the Very Rev Dr Pete Wilcox, Dean of Liverpool and the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor, at the Connor Clergy Quiet Morning. Picture: The Rev Janice Elsdon.

Dean of Liverpool is Quiet Morning guest

Clergy from across Connor Diocese enjoyed an informative Quiet Morning with special guest speaker the Very Rev Dr Pete Wilcox, Dean of Liverpool, on November 10.

The day was hosted at Lisburn Cathedral by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy.

Dean Wilcox gave two talks, the first entitled Lamentations in Advent: The cry of those who suffer violence, and the second was Revelation in Advent: The fate of those who perpetrate violence.

There was a break for coffee between talks and the morning ended with lunch, giving clergy the opportunity for further fellowship.

Pete trained at Ridley Hall in Cambridge after completing a degree in modern history at Durham University. He served as a curate on Teesside, and then studied for a doctorate at Oxford University, before returning to the Durham Diocese to serve as a team vicar in the Parish of Gateshead.

During this time he assisted in the training of ordinands at Cranmer Hall as Director of its Urban Mission Centre. Theological education and training remains a key area of interest for Pete, and bible teaching is his chief passion.

In 1998 he took up a new position as priest-in-charge of St Paul's Church at the Crossing in Walsall – an ambitiously re-ordered town centre church combining the leadership of a Christian Social Enterprise



Lisburn Cathedral hosted the Quiet Morning.



The Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Belfast, chats to the Rev Rachel Creighton at the Quiet Morning.

with that of a thriving congregation.

Between August 2006 and July 2012 he was Canon Chancellor at Lichfield Cathedral.

Dean Wilcox is author of three books: 'Living the Dream' (2007), 'Walking the Walk' (2009) and 'Talking the Talk' (2011).



Katherine Robertson, a parishioner of St John's, Malone, works with the Women's Resource and Development Agency to promote training in awareness of cancer screening programmes.

Raising awareness of cancer screening

A parishioner of St John's Parish, Malone, is at the forefront of a drive to raise awareness of breast, cervical and bowel cancer screening.

Katherine Robertson is a former member of Connor Training Council, and is currently working with the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA).

Katherine's role is to promote training for groups in screening for these cancers to increase early awareness of symptoms and ultimately save lives, and she is hoping parishes will take up the opportunity to host training sessions.

A parishioner of St John's since the age of nine, Katherine studied psychology at Queen's University before moving to England where she worked with children and young people with epilepsy before returning to Northern Ireland to do a Masters in Social Work.

Katherine said this was a difficult time in her life. "I managed to complete the course but did not feel that it was the right

direction for me." She instead found work with Voluntary Service Belfast, matching people with befrienders and developing advocacy, shopping and other services for people who were very isolated.

After 13 years Katherine moved to work with the Social Work Training Council, engaging Service Users and Carers in the organisation, work she describes as 'quite ground breaking.'

Her involvement with the fledgling Connor Training Council began in 2000 when Alan Harper, then rector of St John's who later became Bishop of Connor, invited her to join it. She remained a member until it finished in 2011.

"I was involved in surveying parishes to establish their training needs and writing the reports afterwards. We appointed the Diocesan Training Officer. There are not

many committees you are on that you get the opportunity to identify a need and secure funding for a post. I feel we really achieved something," Katherine said.

In 2009, Katherine moved to work part time for Oasis Caring in Action, having decided to retrain in health promotion. "I felt this was very positive, trying to encourage people to be aware of their health and to get involved in behaviour that would improve their well-being. One of the ideas of health promotion is the focus on prevention so people make changes at an early stage so they don't get illnesses," Katherine said.

In 2009 she moved to WRDA and she now co-ordinates the agency's breast, cervical and bowel screening awareness programme which targets hard to reach groups.

Katherine said "We have delivered this programme across Northern Ireland to a number of community groups, women's groups and men's groups and it has worked very well. We use participative methods of training and involve the group in the delivery of the programme."

WRDA has a pool of around 50 community facilitators qualified to deliver this training which has been commissioned by the Public Health Agency for delivery to community groups.

One of the three key areas is bowel cancer screening, and men in particular are a difficult to reach group. This can be delivered as a stand-alone two hour session for a men's group, or for groups wanting to learn more about breast and cervical screening, WRDA delivers this training in three two hour sessions. The training is available at no cost to groups as it is all funded by the Public Health Agency.

Any parish interested in hosting cancer screening awareness training should contact Katherine on 028 9023 0212 or email her at katherine.robertson@wrda.net.

Antrim Rural Deanery supports Foodbank

The Rev Canon Derek Kerr, Vicar of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion, presents a cheque for £1078.74 to Fionnuala O'Donnell, foodbank co-ordinator with Oasis Caring in Action, Antrim. Looking on are, from left: The Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth (Ballynure and Ballyeaston); the Rev Ian Magowan (St Patrick's, Parkhall and Connor); the Ven Dr Stephen McBride (Antrim); the Rev Canon David Humphries (Kilbride) and the Rev Andrew Ker (Templepatrick and Donegore). The clergy are all members of Antrim Rural Deanery – parishes in the deanery raised the money through collections held over the course of six Lenten services.



Get set for Patrick's Mysterious Adventure

Connor Children's Council has big plans for the period surrounding St Patrick's Day 2017, with members busy organising a five-day event to take place in March in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

Patrick's Mysterious Adventure is a family friendly event aimed at helping people of all ages to discover first-hand the adventurous life story of St Patrick through an exhibition and interactive story trail.

Actors will re-enact the tale from Patrick's capture by Irish pirates to his return to

serve the people of Ireland.

The event will include workshops, Irish dancers, circus performers, Viking battle re-enactments and much more!

It will run in St Anne's from March 15-19. Primary schools from inner city Belfast have been invited to participate on the first two days, and the Children's Council is working in partnership with the St Patrick's Centre in Downpatrick which is providing an education officer to host a workshop. A local artist based on the Shankill Road will

lead another workshop. (See back page for more event details).

All visitors will be welcomed on March 17-19 and the week will finish with a special intercommunity St Patrick's themed service beginning at 3.30pm on March 19.

Anyone wanting more information should contact Connor Children's Officer Jill Hamilton on jill@connor.anglican.org.



Christian Aid says count your blessings

This Lent, Christian Aid is asking people to reflect each day on the blessings in their own lives through 'Count Your Blessings', and to pray for communities like South Sudan which urgently needs humanitarian aid.

Connor Diocese has been in partnership with Yei Diocese in South Sudan for almost nine years, but Bishop Alan Abernethy, who visited in January 2013, has been unable to return since the outbreak of a new period of civil unrest in December that year.

Last July, a team from Lisburn Cathedral had to cancel their plans to travel to Yei at the last minute due to a deterioration in the local situation.

Christian Aid is working with people displaced within South Sudan, who are living in some of the hardest to reach places, to provide much-needed food,

safe water, sanitation facilities and essential household items, such as sheeting for temporary shelters. It is also providing fish hooks and nets so the people can start to rebuild their lives and become self-sufficient.

Count Your Blessings takes people through the lead up to Easter, Jesus' death and resurrection, with stories of Christian Aid's work throughout the world.

The charity tells the story of Michael who lives in South Sudan. Michael is in his 70s and has failing eyesight. Government forces came to his village, killing people and stealing cattle, forcing Michael to flee



Michael is a skilled fisherman.

to the swamp with his family, who had to lead him through the water. When they returned after two months, most of their belongings were gone.

Thankfully, they had some fishing hooks and nets from Christian Aid. Already a skilled fisherman, now Michael can teach the younger people to fish so they can feed their community.

Throughout Lent, Christian Aid is reflecting on the hymn 'When I Needed A Neighbour, Were You There.'

"Through Count Your Blessings, we are asking you to reflect each day on the blessings in your life, as well as how you live out your faith and follow Jesus' call to a radical hospitality and sacrificial love. There are daily opportunities to give, act and pray for communities like Michael's, helping them to find a safe place to call home," said the charity.

- For more information, to order more copies of the leaflet enclosed in this Connor Connections, or to support the work of Christian Aid Ireland visit christianaid.ie/lent or call 028 9064 8133.



History was made in St Anne's Cathedral on January 15 when the Cathedral's first Lay Canons were installed. The Very Rev John Mann, Dean of Belfast is pictured with the new Lay Canons, Mrs Myrtle Kerr, Clonallon and Warrenpoint with Kilbroney Parish, and Mr Robert Kay, Agherton Parish.



At the Connor Prayer Breakfast are Joyce Bond, Diocesan Vice President; Valerie Ash, Diocesan President; Hilary Magowan, Diocesan Social Policy rep; Jean Kennedy, Area Chairman; Paddy Wallace, Geraldine Montgomery, Diocesan Vice President; Karen Douglas, speaker, Norma Bell; and Patricia McWhirter, Area Secretary.

Insight into gender based violence

As part of the Mothers' Union worldwide campaign '16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence,' Connor MU held a Prayer Breakfast.

This was hosted by Mid Connor in St Jude's, Muckamore, on November 12 and more than 60 MU members attended.

Connor members were encouraged to use materials provided by All Ireland MU and invite a speaker to highlight gender based violence at a local level.

Karen Douglas, Service Manager of the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), which is based in the grounds of Antrim Hospital, was the Connor speaker.

Karen provided members with a real insight into sexual abuse. They learned that both males and females of all ages can refer

themselves, or be referred to the Rowan which provides a range of support and services for victims. Diocesan President Valerie Ash said: "Some of the information Karen gave us was shocking."

The morning concluded with the special worship for the vigil and the lighting of the candles for the 16 days.

Valerie added: "Members in Connor have had their knowledge and awareness of Gender Based Violence greatly increased."

MU Worldwide works to challenge the underlying causes and prevention of gender based violence. Through the Literacy and Financial Education Programme, MU empowers participants, in particular women, with literacy and numeracy skills; and enables communities to discuss important issues such as violence against women.

The Family Life Programme brings families and communities together to tackle the everyday issues that they face, resulting in a reported reduction of domestic violence.

In Ireland, some dioceses provide women's shelters with supplies. Other members provide direct support such as helping women move home and accompanying them to court hearings. MU members volunteer in Child Contact Centres.

St Patrick's, Broughshane, members support local hospitals

At their October meeting branch, members of St Patrick's, Broughshane, Mothers' Union Branch put together 45 wash bags for adults and 80 colouring packs for young people.

These were distributed between The Rowan Centre, Paediatric A&E, A2 Paediatric Ward, Adult A&E and the Short Stay Ward in Antrim Area Hospital. They also knitted nine blankets, 16 cardigans

and 35 hats for the Premature Baby Unit also in Antrim Area Hospital. Just before Christmas four members, Wendy Halligan (Branch Chair), Geraldine Ramsey (Branch Secretary), Mina Lynn and Alison Campbell distributed the gifts to the units and wards.

Wendy said: "Despite all the staff being very obviously under pressure working with the patients in their care they took a few minutes to speak to the representatives

from our branch to express their deep appreciation for gifts which will go a long way to helping make the patients stay in hospital a little bit easier.

"This was a tremendous effort from all the ladies in our branch and as it was such a success we are planning to have another Projects Evening later this year. We look forward to another evening of fun and fellowship."



Members of St Patrick's, Broughshane, Mothers' Union handing over their hand knit cardigans, blankets and hats to the staff of Antrim Area Hospital Neonatal Unit.

90th celebrations!

Photographs and signatures of 12 Connor members who celebrated their 90th birthdays in 2016 were displayed at the diocesan MU council meeting in November.

The names were among 400 included in a card presented to The Queen at the Patron's Lunch in London during her 90th birthday celebrations.

Connor Diocesan President Valerie Ash was one of 22 MU members who attended the Patron's Lunch and presented the birthday card for the Queen to HRH the Duke of Wessex.



The Friends in Action team, including Lisburn Cathedral parishioners Denis Fullerton, Keith Forsythe and Tim Flanagan with villagers at one of the drilling sites.

Drilling in Africa for the 'water of life'

Three Lisburn Cathedral parishioners spent two weeks with a Friends in Action (FIA) drilling team in Burkino Faso, Africa, before Christmas. Denis Fullerton, Keith Forsythe and Tim Flanagan joined a team led by Mark Collier and Tim Wilson. The following article is based on a journal kept by Denis over the period of the trip.

The team was met at Ouagadougou Airport at 4am on November 27 by Mark Collier and Tim Wilson. Next morning they travelled west towards Koudougou, the last few kilometres along narrow, rutted dirt tracks. Denis said: "We were in the blackness and quietness of the night in the midst of the West African bush. It was very strange for us who live all our days surrounded by the street lights and traffic etc of Western civilisation."

The team was accompanied by chef Sam. During the two weeks breakfast included porridge, eggs, freshly cooked doughnuts or pancakes and even chips. Lunches were cold buffets and evening meals included chicken, fried and served in Sam's homemade BBQ sauce, or leg of goat.

"We were never hungry and looked forward to the next meal," said Denis. The team slept in 'Smarttents,' a combination of a camp bed and one-man tent. Since nighttime temperatures don't fall below around 22°C, they chose to sleep outside.

They stopped in the village of Kamsi where

a team from Legacurry had nearly finished drilling a well a week earlier. "Straightaway, earnest prayers of thanks, praise and petition were offered both in French and English as we stood side by side, Black Africans and white Europeans united in our faith and love of our Lord and in the service of his Kingdom," Denis said.

After an introduction to the new Northern Ireland-built trailer, the support truck, the large compressor which powers the drilling and the drill rig itself, the team flushed out the accumulated water in the near complete well and slowly drilled down the last 20 feet through the solid rock.

The convoy then made its way out of the bush to Tiekui where they camped beside the new church. "The floor was rough stone and dirt and we cooked and ate under its shade... We were 'treated' to the incessant harsh and noisy calling of the pastor's flock of guinea fowl. Naturally they often disturbed our slumbers over the next four nights as did the equally noisy neighbourhood donkeys and roosters," Denis recalled.



The team hard at work in the heat and mud.

All of Tuesday and Wednesday morning were spent drilling nearby but the team had to abandon its first hole because it silted up quickly. "This must have greatly disappointed the local people, both Christian and Muslim who had watched our progress intently and rejoiced when water had appeared," Denis said.

The drilling rig was moved across the road and the team hit water at about 100 feet but unfortunately the lump hammer was knocked off its shelf and fell down the hole, and for the second time that day, a hole had to be abandoned.

Next day they drilled through hard rock to an excellent flow of water at around 150 feet. "An older Muslim gentleman who farmed this piece of land and had acted as watchman the night before, danced for joy and shook hands with everyone accompanied by 'Dieu merci' over and over. We watched as he dipped his hands in the outflow of water and put it to his lips. This same gentleman had earlier presented us with the gift of a young goat," Denis said.

The rest of the day and the following

morning were spent preparing the well for use before two dozen local people, both Christian and Muslim, gathered to thank God for plentiful, 100 per cent pure drinking water.

The team then set off slowly down the deeply rutted gravel road in the near 40°C heat to the next village, Bomboila, about 30 kilometres away.

They welcomed to Pastor Isaiah's home, probably the best in the village, with solar powered fridge and freezer, sound system, television and lighting, although Denis observed that the pastor's wife worked in a kitchen without benches, cupboards or any powered equipment or running water.

Over the next week, the team faced a constant battle against the sticky mud, blocked drill bits, jammed casings and liners, and illness. But on the Thursday morning their efforts proved successful. "With wisdom from above and our persistent efforts we had finally produced a good working well... the normal feeling of fulfilment and great satisfaction when you drill a well successfully was certainly multiplied on this occasion," said Denis.

Around midday on Friday, the convoy moved on to the village of Fié, past cotton fields and seemingly empty bush. The team began drilling at 5pm and had water from 70 feet with no problems with mud. Work continued until 1.30am.

"It was the end of a very long day. We had not expected to make such good progress but were overjoyed to have sunk another successful well in such a short time," said Denis.

On Saturday morning the well was finished with local help to make the concrete and lay the base for the pump. "Once again, prayers arose around a completed well, our third," said Denis.

The team of six, with their luggage, squeezed into two 4x4s, each pulling a trailer on the long journey back to Ouagadougou, and from there it was almost straight to the airport for a 10 hour flight to Dublin with the three men arriving back in Lisburn on December 11 just before darkness fell.

Denis said that well drilling is a response to deeply held Christian faith. "Clearly, providing pure fresh water in a country like Burkina Faso is practising the Biblical command to love our neighbours as ourselves... FIA take seriously not only what Jesus said - in St Matthew 25:34ff - we are blessed when we give 'something to drink' to someone who is thirsty, but also see providing water as part of the Church's mission to meet spiritual as well



The drilling operations attracted a big local audience!



Moving from one drilling site to the next was not easy due to the size of the vehicles and the condition of many of the roads in rural areas.



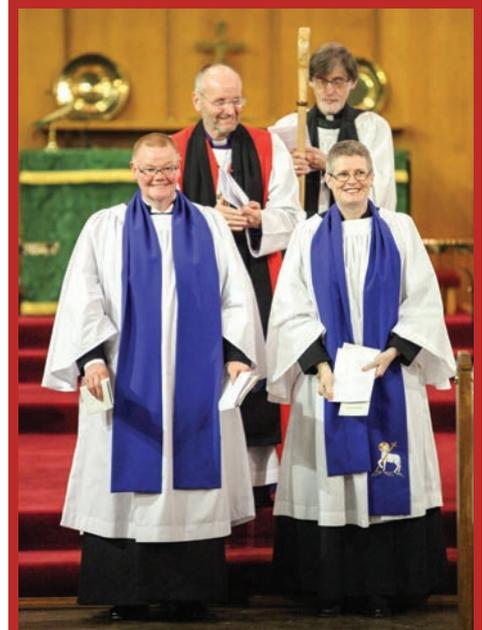
The team slept in 'Smarttents.'

as physical need. All wells are drilled at the request of local churches and mission organisations."

He added: "What a joy it was to stand with so many such believers around a new well and together praise our good and gracious God for his love, for his salvation through Christ as well as for his help and presence in the work we had just completed. Those brief moments were and remain the high points of our time in Africa."

The main focus of FIA UK is well drilling in Burkina Faso. All volunteers pay for their trip themselves while the costs of drilling (about £5,000 per well) are met through fund-raising mainly here in Northern Ireland. Learn more at www.friendsinaction.org.uk

Lay Readers commissioned

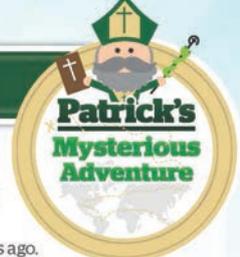


Two Readers were commissioned by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, at a service held in St Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn, on November 9. They were Janet Hunter from St Paul's Parish and Adrian Bell from Glenavy Parish. Janet will be serving her placement year in Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, while Adrian will serve his in Glencairn. Photo: Norman Briggs.



FREE Family Friendly Event

Patrick's Mysterious Adventure



Exhibition Event Details

15th-16th March PATRICK'S MYSTERIOUS SCHOOLS ADVENTURE

Invited schools experience the interactive story trail and see first-hand what it was like to be a slave in Ireland over 1500 years ago.

Includes:

- Live theatre telling Patrick's life story
- Art workshop
- Dig into history workshop
- Snake making competition
- Take away goodie bags

17th March PATRICK'S MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE

Open to the public from 12-4pm

Includes:

- Full access to the exhibition
- Timed performances of the scripted story trail
- Craft workshops
- Premier Circus walkabout entertainers

18th March PATRICK'S MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE - BIG FAMILY DAY

Open to the public from 12-4pm

Includes:

- Full access to the exhibition
- Timed performances of the scripted story trail
- Craft workshops
- Delve into history workshop with local St. Patrick expert
- Premier Circus walkabout entertainers with opportunities to join in if you are brave enough!
- Irish dancing
- Irish harpist
- Puppet show

19th March ST. PATRICK'S THEMED ALL AGE SERVICE

Time: 3:30 - 4:30pm

Come and join us at our family friendly, informal service to celebrate the life of our patron saint and find out more about his influence and lasting legacy in Ireland. All welcome!

If you would like any more information about this event please contact:

Connor Diocese's Children's, Development Officer, Jill Hamilton | E: jill@comor.anglican.org



Exhibition and Interactive Story Trail

Discover the adventurous life story of St. Patrick from his kidnap by Irish pirates to his return to serve the people of Ireland that he loved so well.

15th - 19th March 2017 in St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS			
DATE	EVENT	OPENING TIMES	AVAILABLE TO
15th-16th March	Patrick's Mysterious Schools Adventure	10am - 2pm	Invited schools groups
17th-18th March	Patrick's Mysterious Adventure	12pm - 4pm	All Welcome Family Friendly
Sunday 19th March	St. Patrick's themed All Age service	3.30pm - 4.30pm	All Welcome Family Friendly



BISHOP OF CONNOR'S LENT COURSE 2017

Theme: Stewards of Creation



Dates and Venues - Each talk begins at 7.30pm

Tuesday 21st March - Bushmills Parish Centre

Wednesday 29th March - Lisburn Cathedral

Monday 3rd April - Jordanstown Parish

Booking Form

I wish to book a place at the Lenten talks as indicated above:

Name: _____

Parish: _____

Contact No: _____

For further information and booking details, contact:
 Rosemary Patterson (Bishop's Secretary)
 Tel: 028 90828870 / Email: rpatterson@diocoff-belfast.org

There is limited car parking space at Lisburn Cathedral and it is recommended that you find alternative parking outside the Cathedral grounds. A large car park is available directly across the road from Lisburn Health Centre and the Library, Linenhall Street, Lisburn BT28 1LU, a two minute walk to the Cathedral.

