

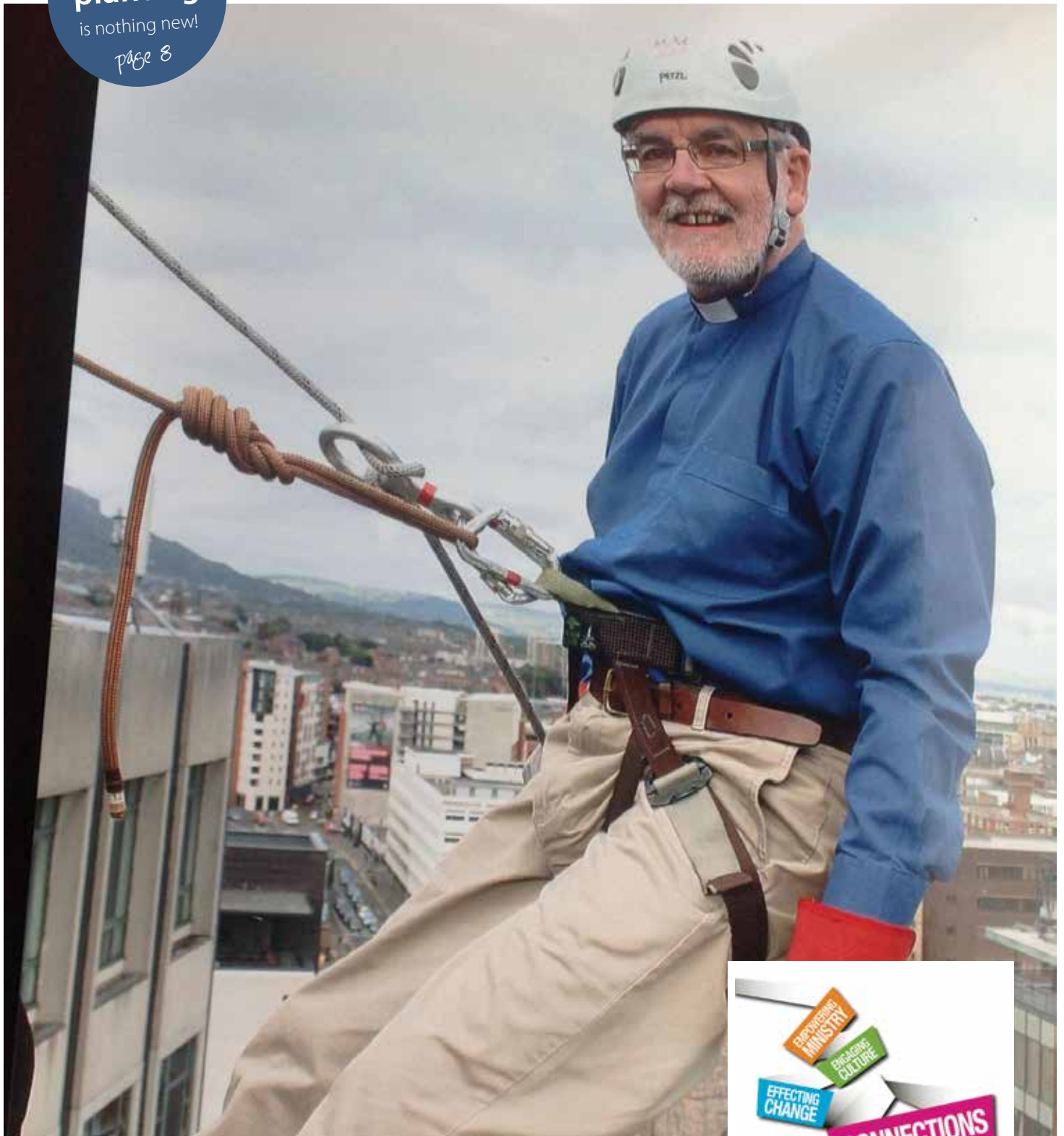
CONNOR

connections

Church
planting

is nothing new!

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World Police and Fire Games Memorial service

A special Memorial Service was held at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on Sunday August 4 as part of the World Police and Fire Games.

The service remembered colleagues, friends and family who died while on duty in the fire, police and prison services in Northern Ireland and beyond.

People from all faiths attended the Christian service to acknowledge the commitment, sacrifice and risk to all who maintain safety and justice in the community. The Cathedral Girls' Choir and the Belfast Community Gospel Choir sang.

Dale Ashford, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service said: "As we welcome thousands of fire, police and prison officers from over 60 countries to compete in the 2013 World Police and Fire Games, it's important that we take time to pause, reflect and remember our colleagues, friends and family, locally, nationally and globally, who have given the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives on duty protecting their communities."



The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann (left) with leaders from the local police, fire and prison services.

Meal for AA group

St Brigid's, Mallusk, hosted an evening meal for members of the Glengormley Alcoholics Anonymous group on June 12.

Alcoholics Anonymous has been active in the Glengormley area for 30 years and has held its meetings in St Brigid's church halls twice weekly for the last four years.

The Rev Andrew Ker, curate, told the group: "We want you to know that we value and admire what you do, that we see you as more than tenants under our roof and we want you to enjoy this evening as an act of hospitality."

After the meal, many of the group accepted an invitation to join in the Late Evening Office with their hosts.



The Rev Roderick Smyth (front right), with Bishop Alan and clergy at the Service of Ordination in St Anne's.

Reflecting on a year as Deacon Intern

Roderick Smyth was ordained a Deacon Intern to serve in St John's, Malone, at a service in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on September 15.

Roderick, from the Parish of St Gall, Carnalea, was a chorister in St Anne's Cathedral and also a Bass Lay Clerk while studying Music at Queen's University. He was organist in St Gall's for 20 years.

For the past 33 years Roderick has worked in education and was Head of Senior School at Bangor Academy and Sixth Form College and an examiner with CCEA.

During his theological training Roderick experienced parish ministry in different contexts with placements in Knockagoney and St George's, both Belfast, and in St Mark's, Dundela.

As part of his studies during his Deacon Intern year in Malone, Roderick will research a dissertation entitled 'Help in the Land of Forgetfulness.' This will look at the church's response to an ageing population and the provision of initial training for clergy and laity in the pastoral care of dementia sufferers in the Diocese of Connor.

Having served a year as Deacon Intern in St Anne's Cathedral, the Rev Andrew Campbell, who has moved to Bangor Abbey as Curate Assistant, described his internship under the supervision of Dean

John Mann as 'a tremendous learning experience.'

"It has allowed me to experience preaching, reading services, and assisting at communion. It has allowed me to visit parishioners, both at home and in hospital, to lead confirmation classes and to be involved with youth work. I have been privileged to share important events in people's lives. It has been a great introduction to ordained ministry, but with the safety net of an intern rector to guide and instruct me," Andrew said.

"The nature of the internship allows ministry experience to be blended with academic study, and my internship has allowed me to continue to work on a doctoral thesis examining the doctrine of atonement and ethics."

Andrew said his experiences had been different to others in his year as he had been placed in a cathedral. "I have been involved in events that only a cathedral can provide, for example the Ulster Covenant Service, the Memorial Service at the World Fire and Police Games and of course the Black Santa Sit Out," he said.

100th birthday congratulations!

Congratulations to Miss Cecelia Gracey, a parishioner at St Mark's, Ballysillan, who has celebrated her 100th birthday. Cecelia received warm wishes from her fellow parishioners, her rector the Rev Robin Moore and also enjoyed a special birthday visit from the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy.



Cecelia Gracey shares a story with Bishop Alan.

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Cover photo: The Rev Barry Dodds, former Archdeacon of Belfast and rector of St Michael's, Belfast, abseils off the roof of Belfast's Europa Hotel. He was raising funds for specialist treatment for parishioner Leah Bachelor. Full story on page 17.



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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Making a difference wherever we are

There are some images indelibly fixed in my mind. As a child I have such happy memories of fishing off the harbour in Portaferry after a cooked breakfast, my granny called it a 'fry.'

I can remember the moment I first put on a dog collar and looked in the mirror, it was exciting and disturbing. There was the joy and celebration of our wedding day which appeared to go so quickly. The wonder at being at our children's births, incredible 'wow' moments that could not be put into words. A phone call that turned our lives upside down when I was informed that I had been elected Bishop of Connor.

There are other images of visiting my grandfather in the City Hospital when he was dying and feeling helpless. Sitting with my mum in the old RV when she was discovering that death was a friend. There have been so many awful moments in parish life when the phone call announced some tragic news of a child's death or a sudden accident bringing about shock and grief.

This ebb and flow is part of what we have been given in being human. There are some who seem to have more than their fair share of suffering and there is no answer as to 'why?'

The questions are met with silence because words only offend the pain. It is in this real human context that we seek to declare the love of God made known in the 'word made flesh.' For each of us as disciples of Christ we are called to live

in the mess of this world and point to someone who walks with us in the joy and pain of being human. This is not about slick and trite answers but about being human and walking with the one who promises 'to be with us always.'

My prayer for myself and indeed for all of us is that we will find ways of making a difference wherever we are and discovering where we are that we can incarnate the presence of Jesus as he lives in us and in our communities.

The following is an extract from a prayer of St Francis that I find inspiring.

"May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

"May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them.

"May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done."

+ Alan Connor



The Rev Kevin Graham (front left) is pictured following his institution as rector of St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis, with Bishop Alan and back row from left: the Rev Louise Stewart, the Rev Clifford Skillen (bishop's chaplain), Canon William Taggart (registrar) and Archdeacon George Davison. The service took place on September 26. (Photo: the Rev Colin White)



The Rev Barry Forde chairs a session sharing good news stories featuring, from left: Dean John Mann, the Rev John Rutter, the Rev Dr Bryan Folis, Ms Catherine Simpson and the Rev Patrick Barton.



Umbrellas at the ready for Mavis Gibbons, Gina Hibbert and other Synod members as they make their way to the parish centre from St Patrick's Church following the Service of Holy Communion.

Growing parishes

Growth was the theme of the annual Connor Synod held in St Patrick's Parish Centre, Ballymoney, on Thursday October 3.

The business of synod followed a Service of Holy Communion in St Patrick's Church.

Keynote speaker was the Rev Canon Phil Potter, Director of Pioneering Ministry with Liverpool Diocese. Avril Chisnal of Liverpool Diocese's TANGO project also gave a presentation. Prior to synod, Canon Potter led a session for clergy looking at fresh expressions of church.

In his presidential address on the theme of growth, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, referred to the vines in John's gospel. "Branches that decide to go it alone soon discover their mistake. But branches that remain in the vine and when necessary submit to pruning, live and bear fruit," the Bishop said.

Pruning, he said, was difficult, challenging and yet a critical dynamic of growth. "Growth has many facets. It is not only about growing numbers but about growing at every level of our community life."

Bishop Alan spoke of the implementation of the diocesan Vision Strategy and its three strands - engaging culture, empowering ministry and effecting change. As part of his commitment to encourage growth he will spend a week in a parish every year to teach, preach and encourage the parish in its work and witness.

The focus of next year's Lenten talks will be discipleship and ministry. There will also be a bishop's training day for clergy in February on the theme of discipleship.

"Individual and corporate discipleship are key elements for us as we seek to grow within our own parish communities but also as we seek to offer service to our local communities," Bishop Alan added.

A structured parish and ministry development plan has been drawn up, focusing on eight parishes each year, and Bishop Alan is also inviting every parish to use Easter Day 2014 as a focus on baptism or renewal of baptismal vows.

He also proposes to focus on unity and celebration. "I believe passionately that we must find ways of sharing together across the diocese to help us in a unity of spirit and purpose," the bishop said.

"The prayer of Jesus was that his church should be one, and on the birthday of the church around the time of Pentecost, we aim for a diocesan wide initiative of unity and celebration." Plans for this are to be confirmed.

Bishop Alan spoke of his 'great personal joy' to visit Connor's link diocese of Yei last January. A team from Connor is preparing to travel to Yei next year, and the diocese is considering the possibility of building a new ward at the children's clinic there.

Concluding, Bishop Alan paid tribute to the archdeacons, his staff, his family, and to people for their prayers, affection and support. "I find myself daunted and yet also encouraged not least because of the many, many people I meet in parishes who give so much and yet never look for any reward," the Bishop said.

During the evening session, parish development worker Trevor Douglas said he had visited many parishes, helping them discover how a plan for growth could best work for them. "Some of you have been looking at your resources, others have been asking questions about your buildings and how they could be used outside of the normal ways," Trevor said. "However all



The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, with Chancellor His Honour Judge Derek Rodgers.



Archdeacon George Davison and the Rev Paul Lyons debate issues raised by the Rev Canon Phil Potter during a pre-synod session with clergy.



Synod members Daphne Gray and Sylvia Briggs, Broomhedge Parish.



The Rev Dr Bryan Folis talks about 'every member ministry' during the evening session of synod.



Avril Chisnal from the Diocese of Liverpool gave an inspiring presentation on the TANGO project and how it had reached out and connected with non-churched people in the local community.



Bishop Alan delivers his presidential address. From left are: Ken Gibson, Sam Wright, Jim Tweedie, Nigel Baylor, Robert Kay, Alan McCann and David Cromie who is concealing diocesan secretary June Butler.

and communities

of your thinking has been around mission which I personally find very encouraging.

"What has really inspired me as I have got to know you is that I have witnessed, ordinary people, doing ordinary things in ordinary places and as a result of your willingness I have witnessed God do extraordinary things in people's lives in ways those individuals did not expect."

Trevor said he has also been working at developing new links that would assist Connor Diocese as it looks to the future. These include a link with Liverpool Diocese and potentially the Diocese of London.

"These are two dioceses that in many ways are similar to Connor and have faced the sorts of issues that we are grappling with. Together we can learn and share so much from our common experiences," he said.

Another focus for friendship is the Catholic Diocese of Down and Connor in particular The Living Church Project, Trevor said.

He described the children's ministry project as 'one of the most important' Connor could establish. "If parishes are to grow then ministry with children must be one of the priorities," Trevor said.

Reports from committees, consideration of communications from General Synod and Notices of Motion were all discussed and agreed during the afternoon session.

In the evening, the Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Belfast, welcomed Canon Phil Potter back to speak about how Fresh Expressions of Church is making a difference to lives and to growth in Liverpool Diocese. Avril Chisnal of Liverpool's TANGO project spoke passionately about how this enterprise has connected with many non-churched people and has really taken church out into the community.

The Rev Barry Forde, chair of the diocesan development team, led a session focusing on success stories from across the diocese. Dean John Mann talked about Culture Night in September which saw up to 9,000 people visit the cathedral.

The Rev Patrick Barton reflected on September's Sunflower Mission in the parishes of Ballintoy and Dunseverick which had reached out to people wherever they were going about their daily business.

The Rev Dr Bryan Follis spoke about his endeavour to bring about 'every member ministry' in his parish of All Saints, Belfast, giving him more time to focus on growth

Ms Catherine Simpson, Ahoghill and Portglenone, talked about the Energize youth project in the Rural Deanery of Ballymena, which had gone from strength to strength. "We granted each other permission to take something on and recognised the gifts in others," she said.

The Rev John Rutter told synod of the success of the Open Door project in Glenavy, where older people meet to enjoy chat, games, crafts and lunch.

Before closing, Bishop Alan thanked the guests who included the Most Rev Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor, and the Most Rev Tony Farquhar, both from the Roman Catholic Church; the Ven David McClay, from the Diocese of Down and Dromore; the Rev Adrienne Galligan and Mr Michael Webb, Diocese of Dublin

The Bishop was thanked for all his work by Mr Jim Tweedie on behalf of the laity and the Rev Canon Nigel Baylor on behalf of the clergy. Canon Baylor said the Bishop was an inspiration. "You are an encourager and someone who is allowing things to happen under God," he said.



The Rev Canon Phil Potter outlines projects which have successfully connected with the community in Liverpool Diocese during his talk at Connor Synod.



Senior registrar Canon Edgar Turner brings communications from General Synod for consideration.



John Richardson, Carrickfergus, Vera McCourt, Stoneyford and Doreen Dodds, Joanmount



Pauline High seconded the report of Diocesan Council.



Lisburn Cathedral's Romania team, from left: Becky Lester, Chloe Hassard, Laura Kilpatrick, Ciaran Steele, Keith Neill, Alistair Brattle, Judith Lindsay, Chloe Jess and Grace Broddle.

Service in Romania is a 'taste of heaven!'

A team of nine young parishioners from Lisburn Cathedral was involved in Christian outreach in the small Romania village of Sutor during August. Team member **Chloe Hassard** reports.

As part of a larger team of 60 we worked alongside people from Germany, Poland, Spain, Belgium and Romania. Although we were the youngest team by far, it was wonderful to meet so many others from different cultures.

Our first challenge was Bushcamp, a simulation of what life is like in poverty. The idea is to 'walk in their shoes' and it is based upon Micah 6:8: "Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly."

The situation we were faced with was survival following the earthquake in Haiti. We had to rummage through piles of wood and cardboard and cross a slack rope bridge to build a shelter to sleep in. We also had to make paper bags to sell to make rent for our shelters, giving us a genuine taste of the reality of slum life.

We were not able to bring any clothes, toiletries or extra water with us, but Bushcamp was a great experience and one which challenged our priorities in life.

Our team ran a club for around 14 children in Sutor village hall. The theme was Bible Heroes, and using drama, crafts, games and songs we looked at Joseph, Jonah and Jesus. We shared testimony with the children, linking the Bible with our lives

today, and I shared the Gospel to help the children understand that the hero of the Bible can be the hero of our lives as well.

In pairs we travelled to a Hungarian village within Romania to visit three homes, bringing each a food package. We sang, shared scripture and prayed for the families, emphasising that they were loved, valued and not alone. The people we visited were elderly, poor and solitary, and it was humbling to spend time with them, telling them about our church in Northern Ireland and hearing about their lives too.

One of the most striking things was that despite having little money, the families were hugely generous in all that they had and were willing to share luxuries with us, such as homemade doughnuts.

Practical work was another aspect of our service. Each member participated in projects including painting, cleaning, tidying, cooking, shovelling stones and digging. The boys were also involved in building a septic tank.

We led a church service in the village of Tamacha. There were only 12 in the congregation but what they lacked in number they compensated for in their passion for worship. Keith preached at



Plenty of fun for the children in Sutor during the bible club run by the team from Lisburn Cathedral.

the service, Laura and Grace shared their testimonies and Alistair read the lesson. I prayed and we all joined in singing songs from home. We felt so welcome.

On our last day we travelled to the city of Cluj where we soaked up some Romanian culture and sunshine

Over the 10 days we experienced the cultures of the other teams, preparing and sharing meals and organising games. Each team led Grace and an evening celebration. It was truly amazing to have one hymn sung in seven languages all at once, praising the one God!

At Team Time each evening we shared a devotional, discussed our experiences that day and prayed together. Each morning we had teaching about discipleship before commencing our service.

When the time came to say goodbye, a few tears were shed because there was such a tremendous sense of community and unity evident throughout the 10 days. We described it as a taste of heaven! But we were also very excited to return back to our own communities and to put those lessons into practice. About being a disciple, about making disciples, to serve and not be served.



Connor Mothers' Union Diocesan President Valerie Ash.

New President aims to raise awareness

Grass roots members of Connor Mothers' Union are the backbone of the MU and are vital to the success of the many diocesan projects, according to new Diocesan President Valerie Ash.

"They are so very important," said Valerie. "I am just a figurehead. I want members to feel they have ownership of MU and encourage them to come out of their branches into the diocese."

Valerie was commissioned as Connor President by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, at a service in St Anne's Cathedral on April 14.

Valerie was born in Londonderry and now lives in Whitehead. Her husband Derek died in a car accident in 2006 and she has a son and daughter and five grandchildren.

Valerie was a teacher for 29 years, most of which were spent at Glengormley High School. In her home parish of St Patrick's, Whitehead, Valerie is a member of the choir, magazine distributor, and has been people's churchwarden and select vestry member.

During her 42 years with MU she held office as branch secretary, branch chair and area secretary. She was also indoor members' representative and prayer representative and at diocesan level was indoor members' representative and later co-ordinator of the Faith and Policy Unit.

One of the great strengths of the MU, Valerie said, is that all its work is underpinned by prayer, and she would like

to raise public awareness of the great work the MU does as a charity working at home and abroad.

She would also like to see membership increase. "There is great friendship within the MU," she said. "It is an organisation aimed at helping families in all areas, and one of the things I am really excited about is the social policy aspect, the success of which was seen in our Bye Buy Childhood campaign. The policy unit does important work lobbying on issues affecting family life.

"The MU has 4.1 million members worldwide and less than two per cent of these live in Europe. Membership is not grey-haired, white and living in Northern Ireland. This is a worldwide charity, and even some of our own members do not know the full story of the work we do."

She paid tribute to her predecessor as Diocesan President, Moira Thom. "Moira was full of ideas and had the ability to see these through to fruition," Valerie said.

Many MU projects in Connor have benefited families living in the diocese. "I do believe that we have made a big impact on those who have come into contact with us, especially families facing adversity," Valerie said, emphasising that MU projects offer Christian care to families at all stages.

Neo natal units receive hand crafted items to make life easier for tiny newborn babies. These include incubator mattresses, matinee jackets, grieving gowns and booties. Last year MU members also knit 1,300 trauma teddies for babies and young children who have to attend casualty.

The Central Belfast Contact Centre provides a safe place for children to spend time with a parent or grandparent who does not live with them. "This MU project began in Belfast in 2000 and is now supported by the local Health Trust and open 50 Saturdays in the year," said Valerie. "There is a social worker and 33 volunteers, 90 per cent of these being MU members. In the past 12 months, 161 families with 207 children visited the centre, which is a very valuable facility much appreciated by those who use it."

Another successful project is the MU Parenting Courses run by trained facilitators. "Our facilitators will go where they are asked and the sessions do not have to be church based. The MU is about Christian care for families, not care for Christian families," Valerie stressed.

Families can also be considered for an Away from it All holiday. "This offers a family who could not otherwise afford it the chance of a break," said Valerie. "This year we received seven referrals and funded three different holidays."

Connor MU's Curry in a Hurry cookbook for students goes from strength to strength, and this year 16,000 copies were distributed in 11 dioceses.

Adults entering hospital in an emergency are offered a Connor MU washbag which contains everything needed for an unexpected overnight stay. More than 700 washbags were given out in hospitals in Connor in the last year.

The washbags, trauma teddies and even the hand knits for the tiny babies are all given out along with a prayer card, emphasising the spiritual element of these MU projects.

Valerie is looking forward to the Worldwide General Meeting of the MU which comes to Belfast's Waterfront Hall on June 21. A pre-meeting service will be held in St Anne's Cathedral on June 20, and the MU in Connor and Down and Dromore dioceses are co-hosting this meeting which is expected to have 1,900 attendees from around the world.

"I hope that MU members here in Connor will avail of this opportunity to come along and meet people and see MU from a worldwide perspective," said Valerie.



The Rev Dr Bob Cotter was introduced as Non-stipendiary Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of St Mary Magdalene, Belfast, on June 26. Dr Cotter was formerly curate at the United Parish of Skerry Rathcavan and Newtowncrommlin, Broughshane. Pictured at the service are, from left: Mr Hugh Rodgers, Rector's Churchwarden; the Rev Robert Jones, Rural Dean for South Belfast; the Very Rev John Bond, Dean of Connor; the Rev Dr Bob Cotter; the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor; the Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Belfast and Mr Peter Ainley, People's Churchwarden.

String Quartet's visit to Cairncastle

St Patrick's Parish Church, Cairncastle, rocked to the beautiful sounds of the Ionian String Quartet on the evening of Friday September 6.

A picnic supper completed the atmosphere of a local night at the Proms! The event was planned to bring all sections of the community into the beautiful 17th century church.

Diocese appoints children's worker

The Diocese of Connor has now appointed a children's worker to its development team.

Speaking at diocesan synod, the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy said: "As we remember the findings of our diocesan survey it was very clear that the need for help, resources and support for children's ministry was a priority across the diocese."

Weekday choral services at St Anne's

St Anne's Cathedral now provides two choral services on weekdays for everyone heading home after work or shopping.

On Monday at 5.30pm there is Sung Compline and on Wednesday at 5.30pm there is Choral Evensong. Each service lasts for about 20 minutes and provides a quiet and peaceful end to the working day.

"The traffic will be so much lighter after 6pm and the journey home full of heavenly melody!" said the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann.

Planting new seeds for the Kingdom

One of the key goals of the Diocesan Vision Strategy is 'to see new communities of faith planted in areas of opportunity and need.'

This is not a new phenomenon in Connor. In fact, as the diocese considers new church plants in Belfast and beyond, a cursory glance across our shared history reveals a long and deep tradition of starting something new.

St Hilda's, Kilmakee, is a church plant conceived in the 1950s. Dunmurry Parish accepted responsibility for caring for those moving into new estates, and in May 1956 services began in Kilmakee Orange Hall.

A church/hall was dedicated to St Hilda two years later. The Parish of Kilmakee was constituted in 1964 and a new church was consecrated in December 1970.

Another church plant is St Columba's, Dunclog. The church was constructed in 1975 in response to new housing developments in the area. Today members are drawn from throughout Ballymena.

Ballymacash was part of the Parish of Derriaghy until 1967 when the Parish of Ballymacash was established. The original St Mark's Church (1892) was a chapel of ease, and in response to the growth in the population of Lisburn the present St Mark's Church was built in 1975.

Holy Trinity Woodburn opened in December 1992, and was built by St Nicholas' Parish, Carrickfergus. Holy Trinity gained parochial status in April 2000 and has since been extended to accommodate a growing congregation.

The Parish of St Patrick's, Parkhall, Antrim, was the daughter church of All Saints' Parish in Antrim, and was consecrated in May 1976.

St Andrew's Glencairn, is a church plant of St Mark's Ballysillan. It was consecrated on St Andrew's Day 1971 and is owned jointly by the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church. Many people from the Sandy Row and Ardoyne areas were re-housed in the new Glencairn estate.

Kilroot Parish was part of the Parish of Carrickfergus until industrial expansion in the area resulted in the building of a temporary church hall, dedicated in 1971. A new church was dedicated in 1981.

St Paul's Longstone Street is a daughter church of Christ Church, Lisburn, and was

intended to serve new housing estates in the area. Two army huts were converted into a church and hall, dedicated in September 1962. A new church building was consecrated in January 1964 and St Paul's became a separate parish in 1966.

Monkstown was part of the Parish of Jordanstown. In the 1960s the possibility of building a church to be used by the Methodists, Presbyterians and Church of Ireland was discussed and a disused meal store was used for services. Agreement for a church shared by Methodists and Church of Ireland was reached in 1966. The church and hall were consecrated in 1970.

Lambeg also has a church plant in the Hilden Centre which opened in 2001.

These are just some examples of the history of church planting in the diocese. There are many more stories of new communities, services, forms of outreach, and churches opening as a result of both seeing the vision and meeting the need.

The Rev Barry Forde, chair of the Vision Strategy Development Team, said: "In every generation there is a new name or phrase that on the surface suggests a 'new thing,' but essentially is the recovery of an old thing done well.

"Church planting,' 'pioneer ministry,' 'fresh expressions,' 'the mission shaped church' - are merely contemporary idioms for the activities of God's people for centuries. They may be articulated, expressed, and implemented in different ways and through a variety of means, but at its heart the church has always sought to grow.

"The Diocese of Connor has a rich history of trying new things, planting new communities of faith, introducing new expressions of worship. It is our hope to see this tradition carry forward over the next decade."

Barry continued: "These are just some of the stories from within our diocese. We would love to hear more. We have much to learn from each other as we continue the act of planting new seeds for the kingdom across the diocese."

If you have a story to share please contact DCO Karen Bushby.



Scouts Sam Colgan, Jack Price and Joe Hutcheson enjoy a sunflower moment during the mission in Ballintoy and Dunseverick (Photo: Patrick Barton).

Sunflower moments for coastal parishes

Sunflower moments – those moments when God's power moves in our lives – were plentiful during a wonderful weekend of mission in the grouped parishes of Ballintoy and Dunseverick.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, who coined the phrase 'sunflower moments' during a Lent healing service in Dunluce, led the mission. It involved not only parishioners from Ballintoy and Dunseverick, but also their mission partners from St Patrick's Parish Ballymoney and local people.

This was a mission with a difference, reaching out and sharing with people as they went about their weekly business. The Sunflower Mission kicked off on Thursday September 12 when Dunseverick Primary School joined parishioners in Dunseverick Church for their morning assembly. An all singing and dancing message was delivered by the Rev Andrew Sweeney, rector of Ballymoney.

Bishop Alan and mission team members then spent time with the Mount Druid Parent and Toddler's Group, and that evening parishioners shared the stories behind their favourite hymns during an exhilarating and moving Songs of Praise.

On Friday morning there were prayers for healing with the Bishop in Ballintoy Parish Church and that evening Ballintoy and Dunseverick Scouts hosted a camp fire and barbeque in Ballintoy Harbour.

On the Saturday morning the weather was kind for a walk around Ballintoy and along the cliff path with the Shore Ramblers, followed by cream tea in the parish hall. The Youth Club hosted a dance on Saturday night. Bishop Alan taught everyone an African dance. It was also a time to remember missing loved ones.

Sunday morning was the climax of the Sunflower Mission with a service starting in Dunseverick and continuing in Ballintoy, followed by a soup and rolls lunch.

The Sunflower Mission was the first hosted by the parishes in 40 years, and it aimed to build and nurture connections with groups and organisations in the local community on the north Antrim coast.

"We hope that this mission touched



Bishop Alan demonstrates the breadth of mission outreach.



The Rev Andrew Sweeney gets stuck in at the Dunseverick Primary School Assembly.

people's lives. Our tagline is 'Growing, Healing and Reconciliation,'" said the Rev Patrick Barton, rector of Ballintoy and Dunseverick. "We wanted to bring people together and help them understand that we are all employed in mission. It was about reaching out to people and sharing God's good news.

"We have very much appreciated having Bishop Alan share so much quality time with us and we are encouraged to build upon the seeds of hope and love sown in this Sunflower Mission, may we continue to grow healing and reconciliation."

Front line work - by Canon Neil Cutcliffe

I got involved because churches from different denominations are working together on the ground and because there is a great need for something like this in Newtownabbey.



These kids are a strata of society that no church is reaching. They believe the church has no interest in them. This gives us a chance to do something for them. It is not a preaching mission.

In training, we learned about working with the police, the council and other social bodies, about drug and alcohol awareness and first aid. Our first experience on the streets was in Belfast. There you might never meet a person twice, but in Newtownabbey we are meeting the same groups regularly.

Since we started, anti-social behaviour in the areas we work in is down by 60 per cent. We are not a police organisation. We do not take drink or anything off anyone. We are not heavy handed. We do get a bit of abuse at times, but it is really low key.

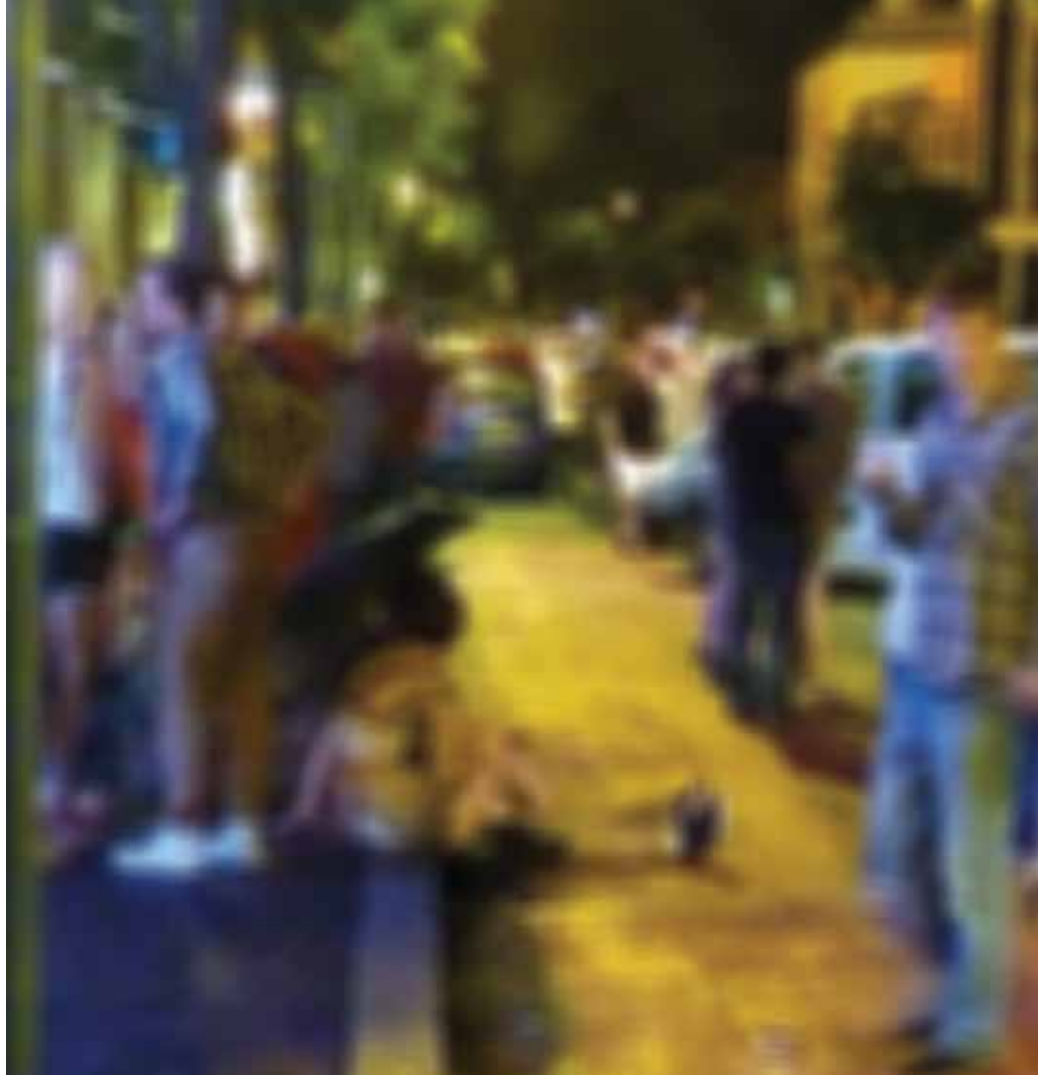
Drugs are a bigger problem than alcohol. You have to use your common sense and you do not put yourself in danger. If there is trouble you walk away. We are there to help kids and chat to them and make them feel they are valued.

I would recommend anybody to give it a go. It strengthens the links between churches and individuals and it strengthens your own faith. We are out there on the streets seeing things happening, kids changing over the weeks as they get to know you. This is front line work.

Neil Cutcliffe is rector of Mossley and a Newtownabbey Street Pastor.



Street pastors at work.



A late night

More volunteers needed together to make nights

At weekends, in the early hours of the morning, our city streets come alive. Young people spill out of pubs and clubs heading for home.

For some a good night out can turn bad. After too much alcohol emotions run high, arguments develop, there may be a queue for taxis, or no taxis at all. Girls have cast off their platform shoes and walk barefoot on pavements where bottles and glasses lie smashed.

Street Pastors are there to help. In Belfast city centre during 2012 Street Pastors prevented 28 assaults, gave assistance and advice to 339 people, handed out more than 400 pairs of flip flops to barefoot young women, prevented almost 30 assaults, helped more than 150 people get home and lifted nearly 5,000 discarded bottles and glasses.

Street Pastors is a cross denominational ministry which works in partnership with Belfast City Council and the PSNI. They

are on the streets on Friday and Saturday nights and their aim is to care, listen and help. They are in radio contact with CCTV control so pastors know what is happening where and can report any difficult situations.

Street Pastors also work in Newtownabbey. The only other branch of the organisation in Ireland is in Cork.

Trevor Betts, co-ordinator of Belfast Street Pastors, said there are around 30 volunteers, but the organisation needs more Christians to join them.

"We are trying to encourage as many people from different churches to become involved," said Trevor. "We have 30 volunteers and we would like to have 130. We only ask people to go out once a month and ideally we would have four

Making a difference - by Janet Hanna

I really enjoy being part of Belfast Street Pastors. It's good craic and you meet some real characters

We go out once a month. We meet at about 10.30pm, have a cup of tea, check we have everything in our bags like our first aid kit, gloves – I am obsessed with picking up glass bottles because I see them as potential weapons – flip flops for the girls, water, sweets and a brush and pan for broken glass.

We hit the streets about 11.30. There are three or four of us in a team, always at least one female and we cover quite a few miles each night.

There are lots of young people, often girls on their own because their friends have left them behind. When I was young we all went somewhere together and left together. Now they send each other texts saying they are going on somewhere else, the message isn't seen and they just leave, which means lots of girls waiting for lifts on their own.

It is not always young people who need our help. On my first night out we came across a man in his sixties lying on the ground who was really intoxicated. We were afraid he would choke. We practically carried him home as none of the taxis would take him in the state he was in. I dread to think what might have happened to that man if we had not been there.

I can honestly say I have never felt threatened on the streets. I have had only good experiences and most people just want to talk. I genuinely feel we are making a difference in people's lives.

Janet Hanna is a Belfast Street Pastor and member of Christ Church, Lisburn.



Janet Hanna from Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, is a Street Pastor in Belfast.

ded as churches work ht time streets safer

teams made up of four members out every Saturday night."

All Street Pastors receive 50 hours of training and practical discipling on the streets. "Often the people we meet will have had too much to drink, but people are mostly good natured and so appreciative of what we do," said Trevor. "We offer basic first aid, give the girls flip flops, we carry water and even sweets which can help calm a potentially violent situation. We pick up bottles and sweep up broken glass.

"We are a positive presence. We do not preach at people although all our pastors are Christians. We talk to people and if they want to talk about issues Christian we are happy to discuss things with them. We also give them a card. But this is not about street evangelism."

"This is about the church being out on the streets helping out in a positive, practical, caring way and as we do that we do get

to talk to people and sometimes be a signpost to help them on the right way.

"Not long ago, on the footbridge over the River Lagan, we came upon someone contemplating suicide. We were able to talk him out of it. We often find young girls who have had too much to drink and have become separated from their friends. We wait with them until they get a lift home"

Belfast Street Pastors target four night zones, the City Hall, Cathedral Quarter, Odyssey and Shaftesbury Square / Botanic Avenue.

"These places are a completely different world late at night," said Trevor. "Everyone is piling out of the pubs and queuing for taxis. Often they have not planned how they are going to get home and with drunk people there is the potential for things to get out of hand. We are there to help people get home safely and make Belfast a better city."

ght scene in the Shaftesbury Square area of Belfast, one of the locations Street Pastors can be found working at weekends.



Members of the Choir of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, on the steps of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, with Bishop Alan and Paul Gilmore who gave them a guided tour of the cathedral.

Cambridge choir pays visit to Belfast

The Choir of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, was welcomed to a reception at Church House, Belfast, on July 8 by the Bishop of Connor.

Choir members, who were visiting Northern Ireland to take part in a number of engagements celebrating the quatercentenary of the birth of former Bishop of Connor Jeremy Taylor, were then given a guided tour of St Anne's Cathedral by Mr Paul Gilmore.

Directed by Dr Geoffrey Webber, the choir performed in St Peter's Cathedral, Belfast, St George's Parish Church, Belfast and in St Malachi's Parish Church, Hillsborough, where the service was recorded by BBC Radio 3.

Chorister Stephen Fort said he had enjoyed the engagements in Northern Ireland. "I loved looking around Hillsborough and walking around the lake," he said.

Catharine Baumann, who has just finished her final year at Cambridge, said: "We have received a lovely welcome here in Northern Ireland."

Director Dr Webber said the choir had previously recorded an album of Christmas music in St Anne's Cathedral. "It is nice to be back, and the tour so far is excellent. We have really enjoyed singing in the city," he said.

Jeremy Taylor was one of Caius College's most distinguished Fellows. He became Bishop of Down and Connor in 1661 (to which was added later the See of Dromore) and remained there until his death six years later.

The choir's visit to Northern Ireland was

the culmination of the College's Taylor celebrations.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, welcomed the opportunity to host the choir for the reception. In May this year the Bishop was a guest in Cambridge where he preached at a Service of Choral Evensong marking the 400th anniversary of Taylor's birth.

The service was held in the Chapel of Gonville and Caius College where Taylor studied. Bishop Alan said: "The choir was wonderful when they sang during that service in Cambridge and again when they performed in St George's in July."

MBE for St Anne's parishioner Desney

Congratulations to St Anne's Cathedral parishioner Mrs Desney Cromey who was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Desney received the award for 'services to bereaved children in Northern Ireland.' She is a co-founder of Treetops Child Bereavement Group and the NI Child Bereavement Network. In 2010 Desney retired after 22 years working with the Pastoral Support for Clergy group and Continuing Education in Ministry team in Connor Diocese.

She was a familiar figure at the annual Connor CEM retreats, and in 2009 joined the Bishop of Connor at a clergy conference in Kajiado Diocese, Kenya.

Desney is also a founder member of the Corrymeela Community

Making an impact!

Impact Carrick, a streetreach style event, was held Carrickfergus from July 17-19.

Each morning there was bible study, prayer and praise with the volunteers who then headed into the streets and estates to 'Impact Carrick' with God's love through practical service which included litter picking, gardening, art work and even a pop up street cafe. Impact Carrick culminated in a free concert and barbecue in the town centre.

The Rev Peter Ferguson, curate at Carrickfergus Parish, said: "Impact Carrick is a way of showing God's love in words and actions. This is evidence of the Connor Diocesan Vision Strategy at work in Carrickfergus."

Rathlin welcomes visitors from Knock

A group of 40 parishioners from St Columba's Parish, Knock, paid a visit to Rathlin Island on August 4.

They joined parishioners in St Thomas's Church for a service of Holy Communion. The celebrant and preacher was the rector of St Columba's, the Rev John Auchmuty.

"It was a great joy to conduct this Sunday morning service in St Thomas's Church," said John.

The Rev Patrick Barton, priest-in-charge of St Thomas's, Rathlin, said: "I believe our small congregation was encouraged by this gesture of solidarity and that both congregations will be enriched by the experience."



The Rev John Auchmuty with parishioners from St Columba's, Knock, and St Thomas's, Rathlin.

Celebrations in Derrykeighan

The newly reordered and restored Church of St Colman, Derrykeighan, was full for its opening service on June 16.

The celebrations began in the Allen and Adair Hall, the venue for Sunday worship since the work began in February 2012. The officers of the Select Vestry and parish readers carried back to the church various items needed for Sunday worship including a Bible, Prayer Book, communion vessels, and baptismal bowl.

Members of the choir led in a Psalm and brought the music books back to the choir stalls.

Everyone processed from the hall to the newly restored church where the service was led by the curate, the Rev Graham Nevin, and the preacher was the rector, the Rev John Anderson.

The celebrations continued with a guest service on July 5 and on September 4 the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, formally re-dedicated and blessed the work.



Pictured at the installation service in St Anne's Cathedral are, L-R: Canon Robert Jones; Bishop Alan Abernethy; Canon Denise Acheson; Archdeacon George Davison; Archdeacon David McClay; Canon Stephen Lowry and Dean John Mann (Photo: Paul Harron).

Archdeacon of Belfast and clergy installed in St Anne's

The Ven George Davison, rector of St Nicholas Parish Church, Carrickfergus, has succeeded the Rev Barry Dodds as Archdeacon of Belfast.

The new archdeacon was installed at a Service of Evensong in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on September 11.

Other clergy installed at the service were: Archdeacon David McClay as Chancellor; the Rev Denise Acheson as Canon Treasurer; the Rev Robert Jones as Canon of Connor and the Rev Stephen Lowry as Canon of Down and Dromore. Archdeacon Davison was installed as Precentor.



The Rev Derek Kerr, rector of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion, during the Service of Re-dedication following the refurbishment of Duneane Parish Church.

Duneane is restored

A Service of Re-dedication was held in Duneane Parish Church on September 8 to mark the completion of an eight month refurbishment.

Project manager Stanley Love said that 55 people had worked on the project with him and his team of Stephen Kerr and Eddie Hampton.

The final net cost was £187,000. "The majority of spend on the project has been to improve the fabric of the structure, and therefore prolong its useful life, with the balance expended on decoration and aesthetics," said Stanley.

"Design for the proposed improvements was undertaken in-house with actual work carried out on a self-build basis that negated the need to appoint a main contractor. This not only provided for better control and management of the proposed work but also contributed to significant savings in the overall cost of the project."

The church was completely re-plastered inside and out, the vestry extended to include a new boiler house. A new disabled toilet was built, new central heating installed, the church was rewired, the vestry and porch re-roofed, new flooring installed, the sandstone aisle was refurbished, the porch floor retiled, and new doors and hardware installed.

Existing timbers were treated for woodworm, new lights installed and repairs

carried out to stained glass windows. Other improvements included new cupboards, carpeting, PA system, drainage and widening of the avenue.

Stanley said: "Work has been carried out by skilled craftsmen/tradesmen to the highest possible standards and each and every one of them is to be commended for their workmanship. Their collective efforts will undoubtedly preserve the church for many more years to come.

"The rector and select vestry were extremely supportive of our efforts right from the outset through to completion of the work. Consequently work was always allowed to progress without interference and interruption."

Stanley added that he was 'proud and privileged' to have been involved with the restoration of what he described as this 'picture postcard' church.



Duneane Parish Church before the refurbishment.



And after the work was finished. Photos Stanley Love.



Empowering the fight against slavery today

Grace, pictured above and below, whose land was stolen from her by her brother-in-law when her husband died. Land seizure is very common in Africa. IJM helped get Grace get her land back. Photographs: International Justice Mission.



It may be illegal, but around the world millions of men, women and children are still living in slavery, victims of trafficking, land seizure and forced labour.

The International Justice Mission (IJM), which opened an Ireland office two years ago, is working to free people from violent oppression.

Ruth Cooke is Regional Development Executive for Ireland IJM UK. "We aim to raise awareness of what we do, educate people on the issues and raise resources, whether they are prayerful, financial or skills based," Ruth explained.

Last February, Ruth and four others from Northern Ireland joined a group from England to visit Cebu in the Philippines and Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Among

them were Anne Brown, a parishioner at St Patrick's Parish, Coleraine, and Mary Good, wife of the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe.

"Part of our work is legal and Anne is a lawyer so she finds that aspect of our work particularly interesting," said Ruth. "Because what our field officers do is very sensitive, this trip was about learning more and encouraging our teams."

Some 27 million people are slaves today. Twenty two million are in forced labour.

In Africa one in three widows has her land taken from her.

'This is a mission that is both saving and changing lives' - Anne Brown, Coleraine

For Anne Brown, using her skills as a lawyer as part of service is nothing new. Anne, a parishioner at St Patrick's, Coleraine, regularly volunteers with Fields of Life in Uganda.

When she heard of the work of IJM, she wanted to learn more. This interest in the organisation led to Anne taking part in a team visit to Cambodia and the Philippines

with IJM last February. "IJM does different work in different countries. In the Far East it works to enforce the laws against sex trafficking, in India laws against forced labour slavery. I am a property lawyer and was interested to hear that in Africa IJM works to enforce land rights for widows and orphans and help those falsely imprisoned," said Anne.

"When I was in Uganda with Fields of Life I visited the IJM office and went out with their social worker to meet a woman who had lost her land when her husband died. With the help of IJM she got her land back.

"I was very impressed with the collaborative casework model of the IJM team which includes investigators, lawyers and social workers. IJM works with the local community with a focus on capacity building. They are interested in making individual lives better and in bringing about institutional change.

"The visit to Asia allowed me to see this model working in a different environment. I met people in the offices in Phnom Penh

and Cebu and heard their stories and learned about how their work evolves, about the frustrations and the successes."

Anne says she is now involved in raising awareness of IJM and the work it does. "This is a human rights organisation which is very professional in its dealings with different issues, some of which, like trafficking, are on our own doorstep as well as around the world."

Anne urged people to visit the IJM website to learn more about the organisation's work and how they can help. "Funding is needed to help keep and expand their field offices and employ local lawyers, social workers and investigators. They are people who are doing a really difficult job."

In February Anne saw the very real world of the sex trade. "We visited IJM projects in the cities' Red Light Districts to see how difficult and how dangerous it is for some of the teams. IJM's work is challenging and sometimes dangerous, but it is a mission that is both saving and changing lives and communities."



Anne Brown, right, with Mary Good during their fact finding visit to Southeast Asia with the International Justice Mission earlier this year.

"The visit to Southeast Asia was my first trip and it was quite significant in terms of the life of our office," said Ruth. "It was great to see the impact our work has and Mary was able to speak at New Wine this year about her experience with IJM and the issue of trafficking. Anne is also planning an awareness event. If people only heard of IJM through me it would take a long time to get the word out.

"We are quite different to other aid agencies because of the issues we focus on and how IJM operates, providing immediate rescue and relief as well as prosecuting the perpetrators and ensuring long-term transformation to public justice systems."

IJM was established in 1997 by an American lawyer who had witnessed issues of injustice worldwide. "He believed that if laws were enforced around the world less people would be exploited. As a Christian he felt that this was something God was concerned about and as a church we should be doing something about it," said Ruth. "Our vision statement is to rescue thousands, protect millions and prove that justice for the poor is possible."

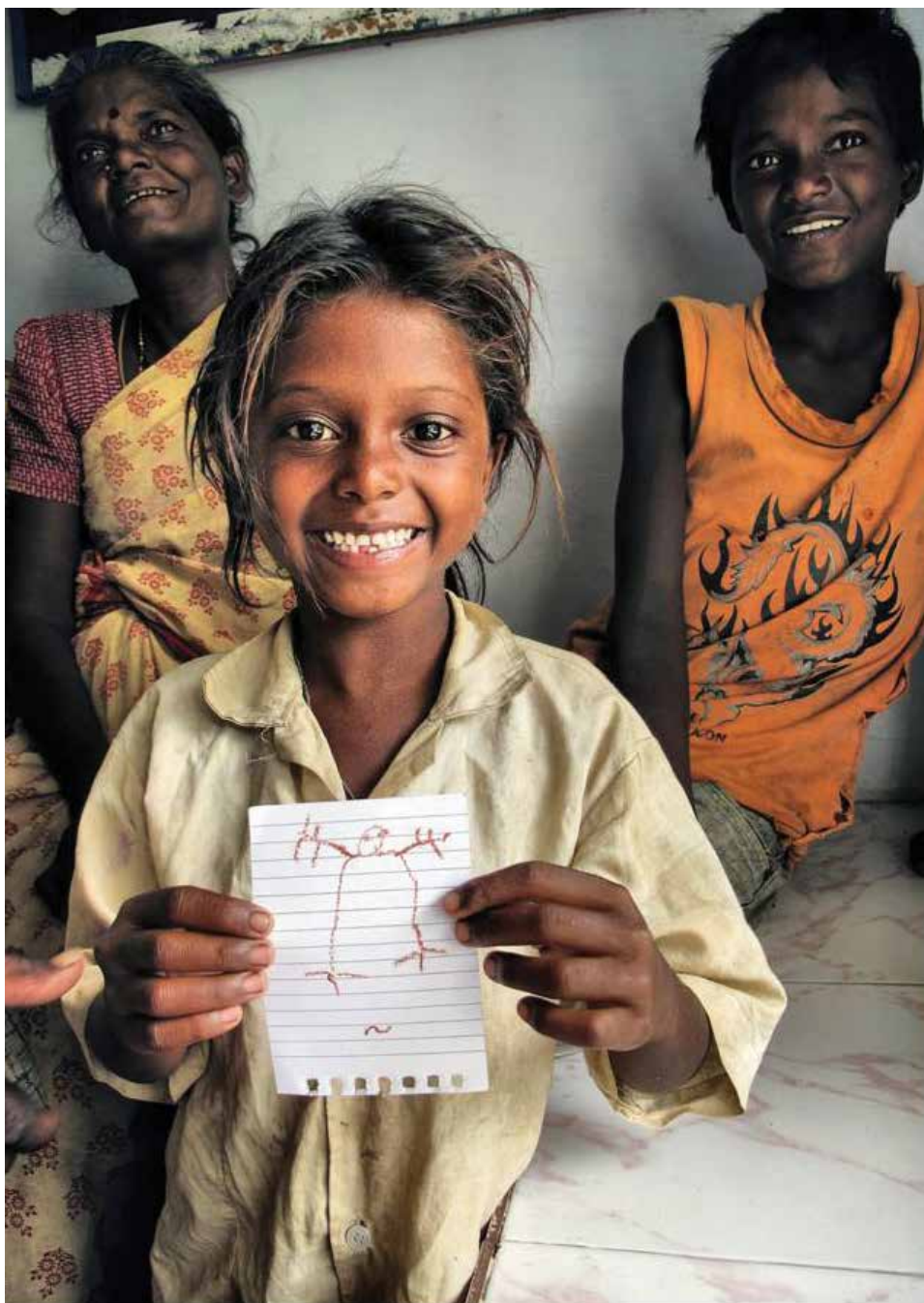
IJM intervenes in situations including trafficking for sex, sexual abuse of minors, police abuse of power, and property grabbing. The organisation has field offices in the developing world including investigators, lawyers and social workers.

"Each office focuses on a specific issue. For example in Cambodia the focus is the sexual exploitation and trafficking of minors. The reason for this is that we want to get deep into the issue and see long-term change," explained Ruth.

"Over the past 10 years in Cambodia IJM has built up a relationship with police and officials. We see increasing numbers of police officers wanting to see change and part of our passion is to empower them. We do not act on evidence ourselves. We help the police to plan and support a rescue operation. We have social workers to help those who have been rescued and lawyers to prosecute or provide support for the prosecution.

"Our support is different in different situations. In a case of forced labour, common although illegal in India, a person often has to work off an inherited debt. Aftercare there following a rescue could include skills training or support for that person in finding a job.

"We are making great progress in India. In 2011 we had our biggest ever rescue of 500 people and earlier this year our second



Jayanthi with the first picture she ever drew – just after she and her family were rescued from forced labour in India. Photograph: International Justice Mission.

largest when 273 people were rescued. Rescuing that number is great, but by prosecuting those who have exploited them we are protecting an even greater number."

Ruth said some of the stories are so awful people can be left feeling only despair. "It is important to get across the message that something is being done. Individuals are being rescued, communities changed and justice strengthened and that is something to be thankful for," she said.

Prayer is a vital component of the work of IJM. But there are other ways to lend support such as volunteering, advocacy and donating. If you would like to find out more, visit the website www.ijmuk.org or email ireland@ijmuk.org.



Ruth Cooke, IJM UK's Regional Development Executive for Ireland is aiming to raise awareness of the work of IJM in tackling injustice and oppression around the world.



Alastair Donaldson, pictured outside St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, prepares for another day of running as he approaches the end of his 1,298 mile Run4Christ Gospel marathon challenge.

Alastair's incredible Gospel marathon!

A Church of Ireland ordinand spent his summer running an incredible 52 consecutive marathons in order to spread the Gospel.

Alastair Donaldson left his hometown of Crossmaglen on July 1 with the aim of running 1,298 miles in the space of eight and a half weeks!

He ran the length of Connor towards the end of his breathtaking Run4Christ, snaking through Coleraine, Ballycastle, Carnlough, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, reaching Belfast on Thursday August 22.

"People have been very welcoming," said Alastair. "The run through Carnlough, Cushendall and Cushendun was wonderful. There were lots of people wanting to talk to us and inviting us into their homes where we were asked a lot of insightful questions.

"One of the questions was 'what does sharing the Gospel' mean and the answer is we just want to tell people of their need for Jesus and to give them a few challenges to think about afterwards, whether already a Christian or not."

He received support from people and parishes, Alastair said, mentioning particularly the Rev Roger Cooke in Coleraine, Catherine Simpson in Ahoghill and Portglenone and Dean John Bond in Broughshane.

But perhaps the most valuable support came from Alastair's team of drivers,

physios and fellow runners. "I have been running every day but have shared it with others," he said. "This was never about the running, it was about meeting people, talking to people and the marathons gave me a hook which people have responded to."

Alastair came up with the idea of running round Ireland to spread the Gospel three years ago. He said that prior to this project he was 'an enthusiastic and hopeful if somewhat ordinary runner.'

"Before embarking on the rigorous training schedule in preparation for this massive challenge I had never run more than two marathons in a year," he said.

At the end of his epic challenge Alastair said the effort had been very worthwhile.

"This was a Gospel Run and I was supported by runners from all churches. I think people seeing something like this happening has been very positive for the church," he said.

"People who joined me on the run also had the chance to set their own goals and create their own personal records."

Alastair crossed the Run4Christ finish line back in Crossmaglen on August 29.

Institution in St Peter and St James

The Rev Brian Lacey was instituted as rector of the United Parish of St Peter and St James, Belfast, at a service in St Peter's on Monday June 17.

Brian hails from Dundonald and later lived in Ballymena. In 1997 he went to Queen's University, Belfast, to study Archaeology. Brian attended the Church of the Resurrection at Queen's and was later people's churchwarden at St Thomas's, Lisburn Road. He was sexton in St Anne's Cathedral before training for Ordination at the Theological College in Dublin.

During that time he served as student reader in St Thomas's, as well as in placements in Ballymacarett, 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 as curate assistant in the Parish of Kilconriola (Ballymena) and Ballyclug.

Brian was instituted as incumbent of St Peter and St James by the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor. Preacher was the Rev Canon Walter Lewis, former rector of St Thomas's, Belfast.



The Rev Brian Lacey (centre) with the Rev Canon Walter Lewis (left) and Bishop Alan Abernethy.

School fundraiser

The Rev Jim Caldwell, curate of St John's, Glyn, had the local community stepping out as one in support of the village school which last year received approval for an extension to its building.

Jim, a school governor, invited the community to walk or run in the Larne half marathon in June to raise funds to help furnish the new extension.

Jim said: "The 13.5 miles proved an immensely challenging and rewarding experience. The fundraiser provided the opportunity to bring people together, to build connections and form friendships between church, governors, teachers and parents. Together the group raised well over £1,000."

Barry goes over the top for Leah

Between morning and evening services on Sunday September 22, the rector of St Michael's, Belfast, abseiled from the roof of the Europa Hotel – as you do!

Former Archdeacon of Belfast Barry Dodds made this leap of faith to raise funds for St Michael's parishioner Leah Batchelor, 23, who on September 24 2011 suffered a massive aneurysm which devastated the cells around her brain stem. Leah's story was featured in the spring issue of Connor Connections.

Barry joined 12 St Michael's parishioners and friends of Leah's family for the abseil. "I have abseiled before and was familiar with all the equipment so I felt fairly confident," he said. "One or two others were very nervous but they were really great and went over the edge for Leah."

Barry said the funds raised from this white knuckle adventure will go towards specialist treatment for Leah. "The State and Health Service do a great job but cannot meet all Leah's needs. This funding will help pay for the intensive physiotherapy that Leah receives when she goes to the Bobath Centre in London," he said.



From left are: Grace Caskey, Canon George Graham, Irene McAleese, Rene Linsey, Roberta McElroy, Joyce Glass, Daphne Bustard, Lettie McMullan and Lorraine Purcell at the Dunluce cheque presentation.

Dunluce exhibition supports MU

An Art and Photographic Exhibition hosted by Dunluce Parish raised £827 for the Mothers' Union Literacy and Financial Education Programme.

A cheque was presented by the rector, the Rev Canon George Graham, to Daphne Bustard, Enrolling member of Dunluce MU branch, and Mrs Rene Lindsey, MU Area Representative.

Canon Graham commented: "At the end of 2012 the Literacy and Financial Education Programme had helped more than 130,000 people across Burundi, Malawi and Sudan to achieve an accredited qualification."



Canon Sam Wright serves Greens' customers Jack Hassard and Agnes Johnston under the watchful eye of staff member Maureen Wilson. Photo: John Kelly.

Rector mans tills in community outreach

The rector of Lisburn Cathedral, Canon Sam Wright, returned to his childhood roots by manning the till in a local grocery shop for a day.

Sam grew up above his father's shop in Bangor and as a teenager he helped out working on the tills.

Rowan Black, managing director of Greens Foodfare, and store manager David Thompson arranged Sam's return to retail during a week of community engagement by members and staff of Lisburn Cathedral.

Greens' staff member Maureen Wilson trained Sam for his day in the business - the last time he worked in retail the only methods of payment were cash and cheques so credit cards, cashback and charge accounts were a new realm for him.

Sam said: "I am very grateful to all in Greens who facilitated my involvement and made the experience very enjoyable. I am keen that businesses in Lisburn know that we appreciate them and that as a church

we are supporting and praying for them."

Cathedral members and staff also made and delivered buns to local businesses. "The message was that we simply want businesses to be blessed by God as they strive to flourish in the current difficult economic environment," Sam said.

"Whilst this was a small gesture, we hope it communicated that we are interested in the wellbeing of the people who provide the services from which we benefit."

As part of community engagement week the Rev Simon Genoe, vicar, and some of the Cathedral congregation carried out video interviews in the centre of Lisburn, asking people their views on the city, on where they find community, on Jesus and on the church. The Cathedral hopes this will help it contribute to building community.



Carnlough village was the setting on July 28 for the commissioning by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, of two lay readers for service in the diocese. Lay readers, Dougie Tyler from Carnlough and Jonathan McFarland, Greenisland Parish, are pictured with Bishop Alan, the Rev Canon Peter McDowell, and the Rev Helen McArthur, rector of Carnlough. Jonathan will serve a training year in Carrickfergus and Dougie in Ballymena.



Ady Comacho from Kathmandu, Nepal, who spent 14 weeks working in Ballymena Parish.

From Kathmandu to Ballymena Parish!

Early this year a new face was helping with ministry in Ballymena. Ady Comacho returned to his adopted home in Kathmandu, Nepal, at the end of May, after more than three months working at St Patrick's.

St Patrick's has had a partnership in Nepal for 10 years, and teams regularly visit Kathmandu. It was in 2009 that they first encountered Ady.

Canon Stuart Lloyd, rector, said: "This is the first parish initiative to bring someone to Ballymena from overseas and it has proved very fruitful. Ady engaged in everything going on in the parish and got to know lots of people. He did a lot of work with our young people, especially the teenagers who seemed to accept things from Ady that they would not accept from anyone else. He was involved in our outreach to students and the choir, and enjoyed the opportunity for prayer in the healing ministry."

Ady, who was born in the Philippines, works in Kathmandu as a social worker and is sponsored by the Filipino Mission Society, an NGO working with street children in Nepal.

"The way of doing church in Nepal is very different to here, but Ady has challenged us and people have very much appreciated his gentle approach," said Stuart.

Ady was raised a Roman Catholic, one of six siblings by three different fathers. It was an uncomfortable upbringing in a culture where birth outside marriage was not accepted.

"At the age of 15 I started to take drugs and alcohol," said Ady. "I was a bit of an introvert and this made me feel like Superman. I moved onto stronger drugs, but at one point I heard God speak to me, telling me I would have to change."

Inspired, Ady began to go to house fellowship meetings and bible study. "I had to give up all my vices. It was hard but the Lord supported me," he said. At 32, Ady was baptised in a local Evangelical Church.

He joined the choir and helped teach classes. In 2000 Ady began volunteering in street outreach for a local NGO. "This opened my eyes to the need in our community. There were loads of street children begging and scavenging for leftover food. We ran a feeding programme and shared the Gospel with them."

His involvement in this mission made him an ideal person to work for the



Ady Comacho with Canon Stuart Lloyd outside St Patrick's, Ballymena.

charity, caring for children living in similar conditions in Nepal. First he had to complete a career missionary programme. "I could only quote one verse from the bible. My evangelism was through action," Ady admitted. "They told me to try and I passed the programme. I was amazed."

Ady first went to Nepal in 2003. He stayed three months, but felt called to return. He had to fundraise to fly back to Nepal where he joined forces with Youth With a Mission, working with children on the streets. "The children's problems were the same as they had been in Manila. They were either abused, had no parents or had run away from home," he said.

Through the street programme Ady was encouraged to join ABC Nepal who he works for today.

In 2009 he met Canon Lloyd in Kathmandu. When a team from St Patrick's visited Nepal a year later they helped create a mural in a drop-in centre where Ady worked. They also saw him at work with the children.

"When they asked me to come to Ballymena I was excited but wondered what I could do here. When I arrived everything seemed so big and so formal. I was worried I might not be able to connect with the people here because they seemed so conservative.

"When I worship the Lord I sing and dance and clap my hands, but being here I have learned to respect different types of worship.

"I have enjoyed working with the students, cooking and serving food, being involved in the youth club and the Living Faith Worship team.

"Things here are different. In Nepal we have our main meal at lunchtime, here you have a massive meal at night. And when I first went to Tesco and Sainsbury... Oh dear, you have such a lot to choose from. At first I felt envy that you had so much stuff, but I got used to it!

"I have enjoyed my time in Ballymena. I met so many new friends and I hope we will remain friends through all the ages."

Chloe, 8, swims a mile for CAP

Eight-year-old Chloe Bond from Ballymoney Parish swam one mile sponsored by her family and parishioners to raise funds for a local Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Centre.

Chloe completed her swim in the Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre on August 12 watched by her rector the Rev Andrew Sweeney, family and parishioners. Chloe's dad Allan is a Parish Reader in St Patrick's. She raised more than £520.

Chloe was inspired to undertake this challenge when her rector announced his ambition to open a CAP Centre based in St Patrick's to serve the whole community in Ballymoney.

Each year, Christians Against Poverty helps 20,000 people find their way out of debt. CAP works out fair budgets, negotiates with creditors and can take people through insolvency.

Chloe said she was proud to be able to use her passion for swimming to help her local community.



Eight-year-old Chloe Bond who dived in to raise funds for Christians Against Poverty.

A helping hand

Eglantine Parish is helping out Hillsborough Scout Group which is in the process of building a new Scout Hall.

Work began in September and the hall is due to be completed next summer.

The Rev Tim Close, rector, said: "Hillsborough Scout Group was looking for a venue during this time. In keeping with the diocesan Vision Strategy objective of engagement with the local community, Eglantine Parish was pleased to offer the Scout Group use of the Parish Hall for three nights per week.

Westminster Abbey experience for choir



By the Rev Clifford Skillen

St Polycarp's choir in Westminster Abbey with Simon Neill and the Rev Louise Stewart (back row, extreme left and 2nd left respectively) and Rachel Morrison (2nd row, extreme left). (Photo: Gillian MacLean)

The choir of St Polycarp's, Finaghy, sang Choral Evensong in Westminster Abbey, London, on August 19 and 20.

Conducted by St Polycarp's Director of Music, Simon Neill, the choir sang special settings of 'Magnificat' and 'Nunc Dimittis' at each service and also two anthems: On the Monday, a setting - in Latin - of Balfour Gardiner's 'Evening Hymn (Before the ending of the day)' and on the Tuesday, Charles Woods' 'O Thou, the central orb.'

On the Tuesday two of the young choristers - head chorister, Rachel Morrison, and Aidan McLean - also sang part of 'Magnificat' as a duet.

Choir members were joined at each service by family, parishioners of St Polycarp's, friends and supporters. On each day, more than 600 people attended the services.

Director Simon said conducting Evensong in Westminster Abbey had been a dream come true. "The hard work and dedication of our ever-growing choir secured this opportunity to sing in this historic Royal church," he said.

"The music brought tears to many eyes, especially with a duet from two of our young choristers.

"The choir took the experience in its stride and it was my good fortune to stand in front of over 700 worshippers, including the

Dean of Westminster, and conduct some spectacularly beautiful Anglican music."

The rector of the grouped parishes of Finaghy and Upper Malone, the Rev Louise Stewart, said: "It was an incredible and extremely moving experience for me as rector to see one of my parish choirs participate in worship in one of the most famous churches in the world, the scene of Royal coronations and weddings, and to be part of a worshipping community which has for centuries sung the praises of our Lord in that magnificent setting."

Head chorister Rachel said she initially felt overwhelmed by the size of Westminster Abbey compared to St Polycarp's. "On the Monday, after four long hours of practice, we were ready for Choral Evensong. As we robed, the excitement was building and the nerves kicked in, but once we started to sing, all the hours of practice were worthwhile and I think we did very well.

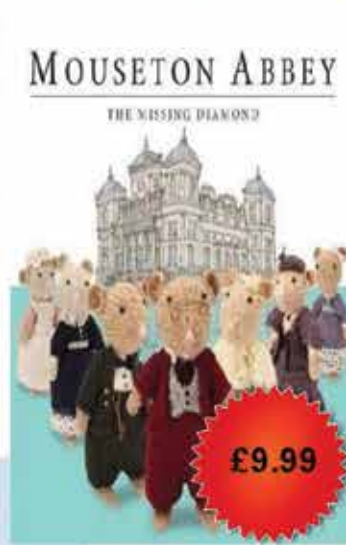
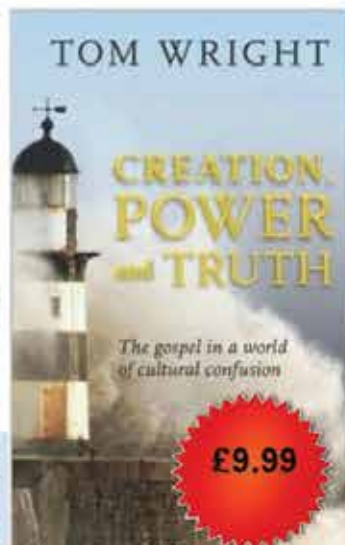
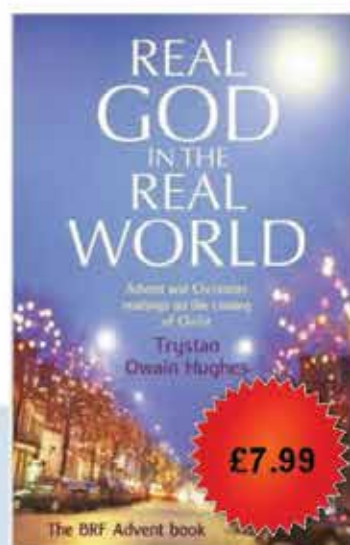
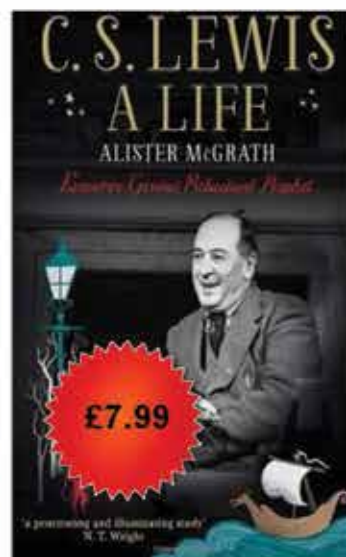
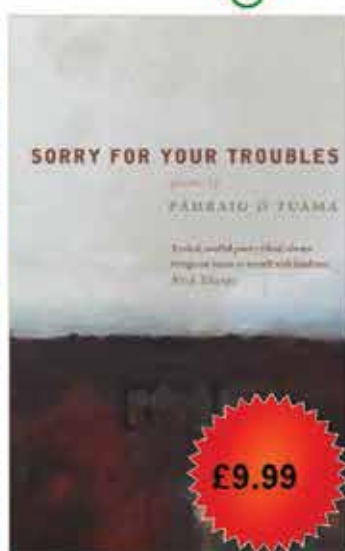
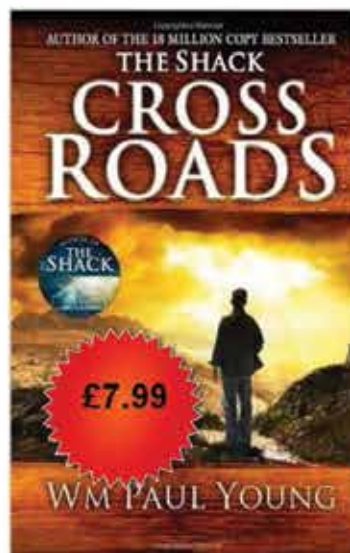
"The trip has been the highlight of my time as a chorister."

Following the final Evensong, the Dean of Westminster the Very Rev Dr John Hall invited the choir to return again to sing in the near future.

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