

# CONNOR

## connections

Messy  
Church

Fun in Glencairn  
pages 14-15





Parish Treasurer Tommy Lyttle hands Archdeacon Stephen Forde cash to give away!

## Larne rector gives away loadsa money!

On November 23 the rector of St Cedma's, Larne, started handing out money to the congregation!

In total, the Ven Stephen Forde gave away more £600! Needless to say, the Archdeacon of Dalriada intends to get his money back and more at another special service in April.

The story behind this cash giveaway is that November 23 had been designated 'Talents Sunday' at St Cedma's. Taking Jesus' Parable of the Talents from Matthew Chapter 25, Archdeacon Forde played the role of the master by handing out talents of money from a supply provided by Parish Treasurer, Tommy Lyttle.

The rector explained that the servants had taken their talents and multiplied them. Even the servant who was condemned in the parable did not lose the one talent given to him, but returned it.

Not surprisingly, there was a long queue of parishioners willing to relieve the rector of his £10 notes and use their own personal talents, skills and enthusiasm to increase the £10. Archdeacon Forde set one condition - any means used to make the talents of money grow must be legal!

St Cedma's Parish is in the midst of a major fund raising project to generate £300,000 to rebuild a new parish hall which will serve the community of Larne.

## Tasty treats at Two Little Chefs fundraiser!

A Cookery Night hosted by Christ Church, Lisburn, in aid of a school in Uganda attracted an audience of 160 people and raised £840.

Two Little Chefs, aka the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and local chef Aaron Heasley cooked up a treat!

Bishop Alan prepared a starter of figs and cream cheese, while Aaron made vegetarian stuffing with cranberry sauce.

# Honour for long serving organist Ian

Belfast Cathedral organist Ian Barber was presented with an honorary Associate of the Royal School of Church Music at a service in Hereford Cathedral on October 4.

It is a fitting recognition for a quiet man who has devoted his adult life to church music.

Son of a Church of Ireland clergyman, Ian grew up in Holywood. He cut his teeth on the organ in the parish of St Philip and St James, and won a scholarship to the Royal School of Church Music.

On graduation, he was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists (FRCO) with a choirmaster's diploma.

Ian moved to Canada where he worked as an organist, and also took a Degree in Theology and Clergy Training at the Bishops' University in Quebec.

Illness forced Ian to return to Holywood, and he was quickly snapped up by St Columb's Cathedral in Londonderry as organist and choirmaster. Two years later he moved to Ballywalter, and also taught at Victoria College and later Strathearn School, where he was Head of Music for 21 years.

Jonathan Gregory, then Director of Music at St Anne's Cathedral, asked him to help out, and in 1983 Ian was appointed assistant organist. This was a post he held until 2010 when he was recognised as organist and choirmaster. With the appointment of David Stevens as Master of the Choristers in April 2012 Ian resumed his role of organist.

After more than 30 years at the Cathedral, Ian has no intention of taking his foot off the (organ) pedals. "As long as I can do it properly I will continue to play the organ in St Anne's," he said.



St Anne's Cathedral organist Ian Barber.

"It is fabulous to play. It is large, very versatile and makes a lovely sound which is helped by the great acoustics in the Cathedral."

Ian was further honoured on September 28 when the Cathedral's new chamber organ was dedicated and named the Barber Organ.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, said Ian's contribution to the musical life of St Anne's had been considerable.

"I am always confident that Ian will play to suit the occasion and the music the choir is singing. In my three years as Dean, I cannot think of a single service that he has not achieved this essential balance. Long may he continue to play the cathedral organ for us!" said the Dean.



Tense moments during the chef-off featuring the Bishop of Connor and local professional chef Aaron Heasley!



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## Cover photo:

Lisa Carson, St Paul's, Lisburn, with members of the African Children's Choir at the Waterfront Hall. Full story page 9.



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

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## A new perspective

I am looking forward to another Lent course this year. They are evenings that I truly enjoy as they give me an opportunity to meet many people and to help us reflect together on important issues.

This year I will be examining the subject of change. When we surveyed all the parishes it was clear that many of us recognised that we need to find ways of changing, but there was also the critical honesty that admitted we can find it very difficult.

There is the proper concern that we are not quite sure what to change or even how to do it in such a way that it doesn't cause confusion and annoyance. I am hoping to explore some of these issues with as many as possible so please do join me if you can.

During the last few months I have been deliberately spending time each day exercising. With the cold and icy conditions it has meant walking rather than cycling and I have found myself much more aware of how much traffic uses our busy roads.

There has also been the delight of the joyous dawn chorus as the birds declare another new day, and the opportunity to greet some of my neighbours as I am not rushing out in the car.

The main reason for the exercise was to lose weight but also to feel better and fitter. It has been a discipline to keep going, but I have really enjoyed getting so much fresh air and seeing my neighbourhood from a very different perspective.

Perspective is such an important part of how we view people and issues. It may be our background, our tradition, our upbringing or our life experience, but we all have perspectives that need to be filtered through listening to others, reading the scriptures, talking to others and the silence of prayer.

I always find myself intrigued by how Jesus could see people through the lens of potential rather than through judgement. He always managed to have the right question or he could discern what the person was really concerned about. People were always changed by their encounter with him.

My own prayer as I have enjoyed walking is to have a different perspective to be able to see people and situations with the wisdom Jesus had rather than through my own prejudice and perspective. I am sure that is something that will help me in seeking to be a servant of all. Perhaps it is a prayer you might find helpful too.

Grace and peace to you all,

+ Alan Connor

## Rector remembered



The former rector of Magheragall Parish Church, Canon Alex Cheevers, who died last August, was honoured in the church on December 21 at a service of Nine Lessons and Carols. An offering was held in his memory, with donations going to support the research work of Professor MF McMullan of Haematology at Queens's University, Belfast. At the service are: Front row left to right: Joyce Mack, Maureen Cheevers, Pauline Connolly, Emma Connolly. Middle row: Yvonne Belshaw (People's Church Warden) Paul Connolly, Charlie Campbell, the Rev Nicholas Dark. Back row: Ronnie Teague (Rector's Church Warden), Robin Mack, and Richard Belshaw (Rector's Glebe Warden).

## Lent Talks focus on 'Effecting Change'

The Bishop of Connor's 2015 Lent Series this year focuses on Effecting Change. This is the third stand of the diocesan Vision Strategy.

The seminars begin on February 17. As usual, Bishop Alan will deliver two seminars at a venue in each of Connor's three archdeaconries.

Details are: February 17 - Jordanstown Parish Centre; February 24 - Bushmills Parish Centre; March 3 - Christ Church Hall, Lisburn; March 9 - Jordanstown; March 18 - Bushmills; March 24 - Christ Church, Lisburn. Seminars get underway at 7.30pm.



Musicians warm up before the start of the War Requiem in St Anne's Cathedral on November 14.

## Standing ovation at end of War Requiem

There was a standing ovation at the end of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem performed at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on November 14.

The stunning concert was a unique cross-border collaboration between the Ulster Orchestra and the RTÉ Concert Orchestra and marked the centenary of the outbreak of World War One.

It also featured the Leeds Philharmonic Chorus, the Belfast Philharmonic Chorus, soloists Elizabeth Atherton, Benjamin Hulett and Gavin Ring and the Girls' Choir of St Anne's with Master of the Choristers David Stevens.

Britten's War Requiem was last performed in Belfast Cathedral almost 49 years previously, on November 13 1969.

The concert was a sell-out, with the Cathedral packed with around 1,000 people including musicians and singers.

## St Peter & St James donates to Child Aid

The Parish of St Peter and St James, which has supported the charity Child Aid for the past eight years, recently sent a donation of £2,250.

Families in need in Chita, Russia, will benefit from a donation of £750. The same amount will help construct the second phase of the House of Light in Mukachevo, Ukraine, a project supporting young people coming out of state care homes.

A third donation of £750 went to the EUREKA Appeal, which aims to get emergency supplies for children into areas damaged in the recent violence in Eastern Ukraine. Many of these areas are under 'rebel' control, and often larger agencies cannot get access to help.

The parish's Charity Action Group said that the money will help those on both sides of the conflict and those caught in the middle.

# Neville's challenge to transform lives of street children

When Neville Jones left the public sector after 33 years and boarded a plane to Uganda he was literally stepping into a new life.

The former Health Service Auditor had taken a leap of faith and joined Northern Ireland charity Abaana as its Assistant Director.

Neville, a parishioner of Lisburn Cathedral, travelled to Uganda because Abaana founder and director Scott Baxter strongly believed no-one could talk about Africa with a passion unless they experienced it.

Neville, son of the late Canon Warren Jones, grew up in Ardoyne and later Lisburn. He studied French and German at Queen's and trained in accountancy in the civil service. He has worked for the DHSS, the DoE, the Police Authority and the Central Services Agency.

"I always knew that at some stage in my career I would like to work in the voluntary or charity sector," Neville said. "Around the time early retirement was floated as an option I had an email from Abaana advertising the post of Assistant Director."

Neville sponsors a child through Abaana, and received the email along with many other people in Northern Ireland who support the charity. It was timely. Neville successfully applied and was on a plane to

Uganda days after 'retiring.' "It was my first time in Africa, and I hadn't a clue what to expect," he said.

What he found reinforced his belief that in this role he could make a difference. He met children living in the charity's boys' home, young men at vocational college and children being educated in Abaana's schools. He also met boys for whom the street is home.

"I met children living on the street, Neville said. "Their fear is whether or not they can stay alive until the next morning. Will they be safe? Will they be able to get a meal? Will they be able to earn enough from collecting rubbish? The money they earn from collecting empty plastic bottles all day might earn them enough for a pancake.

"That is their horizon. A lot of them are taking drugs or sniffing glue to simply numb the pain."

In the charity's home for boys, Neville met boys and young men whose lives had been transformed. "Some boys are doing vocational training. They told us their stories, and they are full of plans for the future. They could not wait to show us their



A common sight - there are many children still sleeping and living on the streets in Kampala and other Ugandan cities. Abaana is striving to offer safety, education and training to as many of them as its funding will allow.





Lisburn Cathedral parishioner Neville Jones, Assistant Director of Abaana, with some of the children he met in Palissa, Uganda.

tools and talk about what they will do after their apprenticeships.

"It can sound awfully trite, but their lives are literally turned around. They were living on the streets because of poverty or because they had run away from home for any number of reasons. All they needed was an opportunity and Abaana was able to give them that."

Neville also toured slums and visited some of the 12 primary schools Abaana has built in Kampala. The charity has also funded water pumps in local communities.

Neville has not met the nine-year-old boy he sponsors but the boy writes regularly so Neville knows he is thriving. "I haven't met him yet because I do not want anyone feeling they owe me, but sponsors are actively encouraged to communicate with their sponsor child if they so wish," Neville said.

Sponsorship through Abaana of a primary school age child costs £14 a month while a secondary school age child costs £16 a month.

The charity supports children who come in off the streets. "The best outcome is to resettle them with their extended family, but we continue to support them. We work closely with the Ugandan authorities to ensure that the care and support they get is appropriate," Neville explained.

Abaana sends teams from Northern Ireland

to work on building projects in Uganda every year. Volunteers also work with street children, providing them with food, basic medical treatment and organising Bible studies and games.

"If people make a donation or sponsor a child they literally do transform a child's life," said Neville. "A little can do an awful lot. We may not be able to change the world but we can change the world for one child."

In Kampala Neville met 16-year-old Moses, a former street child living in the children's home and training as an apprentice electrician and plumber. "Having seen the boys on the street with no hope for the future I was struck by how Moses was just bubbling over," Neville said. "He loved his work and wanted to get married and have a family. He had plans for the future, and yet on the streets he would have been worrying about whether or not he would get through the night."

Another young man whose harrowing story touched Neville was Emmanuel. Living on the streets, Emmanuel was told by one of the other street boys to look after some stolen clothes. But the clothes were then taken from Emmanuel while he slept, incurring the wrath of a man who poured petrol over him and set him alight.

"He was seriously scarred on his hands, his feet and his upper torso. He spent time in the children's home and was resettled



Thanks to Abaana, Derrick has a safe place to sleep, education, and a future to look forward to.

with his sister. He has completed a college course in computer maintenance and hopes to set up his own business," Neville said.

Emmanuel is now 19, but Abaana will support him as he sets up his business.

Neville said that in Uganda a single year in education can add to a young person's life expectancy. "If children are educated they have a much better chance of getting a job and of moving themselves and their families out of poverty," he said.

"I have never been in a job that I did not find satisfying but this is on a different level. I wanted to do something that would make a difference or add value in a tangible way, and the work with Abaana does just that."

You can get more information on Abaana on the website [www.abaana.org](http://www.abaana.org) and if you would like Neville to do a presentation please contact [neville@abaana.org](mailto:neville@abaana.org).



Former airline stewardess Daphne McClements is a long serving volunteer with the Northern Ireland Hospice and the Red Cross. Daphne is a parishioner of St Peter's, Antrim Road, Belfast.

# High flyer Daphne a dedicated volunteer

After 12 years as a long haul airline stewardess, Daphne McClements, a parishioner of St Peter's in Belfast's Antrim Road, decided to come home.

Since then, Daphne has been a dedicated volunteer with the Northern Ireland Hospice and with the Red Cross, and has received awards for her service from both organisations.

Daphne's career began with the airline British Eagle in 1966 when she took the 'Ten pounders' out to Australia. She flew to countries all around the globe, and lived for periods in both Khartoum, Sudan, and in Cairo, Egypt, where she had her own horse. "I loved travelling and seeing new places," Daphne said.

When British Eagle went out of business in 1969, Daphne moved to British Midland, again doing long haul flights, and was on loan to El Al for three months. The time she spent in Israel remains with Daphne, who still visits the Synagogue in Belfast every week.

She decided to unclip her wings in 1978. "One Sunday I came to St Peter's Parish Church. Not being a church goer for many years I was greeted in a most friendly way and I have been involved in the parish ever since, serving as Church Warden for

past rectors beginning with Canon Harris," Daphne said.

"In the early 1980s I was asked to fundraise for the Northern Ireland Hospice, which hadn't been built at that time, so I joined as a volunteer. In those days we did everything from ironing and flower arranging to working in the tea bar and the mail room.

"I noticed that the ladies in the Day Hospice enjoyed having a manicure and for the Millennium the Hospice got a grant from the Red Cross to train eight of us in therapeutic massage."

The link to the Red Cross was particularly poignant for Daphne. "My mother did nursing for the Red Cross before WW2 and her medals are in Head Office in London," Daphne said. "She would be proud to know that I spent six years on the Council for Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man."

Daphne's work with the Red Cross was recognised when, on July 9 2008, she was a guest of HRH The Prince of Wales at a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace to celebrate the centenary of the Royal Charter. Unfortunately the weather was determined to ensure this was a day to be remembered, though perhaps not for the right reasons!

"It was a wash out and the ground was so flooded I lost the soles of my shoes!" Daphne said. "The Duchess of Cornwall remarked that it was a dreadful day - I don't know if she was referring to my floppy feet or being drenched!



Daphne, right, on the horse she owned in Egypt during her days as an airline stewardess.

"I did receive an invitation to another Garden Party at Buckingham Palace last year but because of the experience of the previous drenching I declined."

Daphne continues to work for both the Red Cross and the Hospice. "Working with the patients in the Hospice is so rewarding, knowing that, for a while, I am helping them," she said. "I also work with families doing therapeutic massage and love to see their smiles when I appear. One patient said I had a gift from God, and that meant a lot."





# Packed programme for youth for 2015

Young people can look forward to a year packed with events organised especially for them by Engage Connor Youth.

The popular EVENT will be back both in Ballymena and Antrim, as will REVEAL in Muckamore. Connor Takes the Castle, which proved a hit last September, will return to the stunning setting of Castlewellan Castle and before that, in July, tents and sleeping bags will be at the ready for the annual Summer Madness Connor camp out in Glenarm.

On top of all that, Engage Connor Youth is also planning a big Street Reach over three days in July, Prayer Road Trips around the diocese in April and a Day of Healing with Divine Healing Ministries in St Anne's Cathedral in June.

During the Day of Prayer on June 20, Connor's Street Reach Team will be commissioned by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy. Connor Street Reach in the City will run from June 30 until July 3.

Connor Summer of Mission will see various locations across the diocese connected in prayer via the Engage Facebook and website.

Following the departure of the Rev Peter Ferguson to take up his incumbency in

Derg and Termonamongan, Diocese of Derry, Engage Connor Youth is being co-chaired by Zara Genoe, Lisburn Cathedral, and Sharon Hamill, Church of the Resurrection, Queen's.

Zara and Sharon said 2014 had brought some encouraging developments in youth ministry across the diocese. "It has been brilliant to have had involvement and support from folks across Connor Diocese accessing various events and gatherings for young people and youth leaders," they said.

They said Engage Connor Youth would continue to help the diocese's youth leaders. "Prayerfully we seek to support and encourage you in your youth work and youth ministry. We look forward to further opportunities to develop relationships across the diocese as we all seek to provide positive youth provision for young people, where they can develop positive friendships and explore and deepen their faith."

For full details of all youth events as they come up, visit the Youth pages on the Diocese of Connor website [www.connor.anglican.org](http://www.connor.anglican.org).

Modelling their Christmas jumpers at The EVENT in Antrim in December. Photo by Amy Webb.

## Snow, games, pizza and worship at the Christmas EVENT

**More than 100 young people and leaders had a fantastic night of festive fun at the Engage Connor Youth Christmas EVENT in Antrim on December 13.**

**They came from all over the diocese for an evening of games, worship, drama, prayer and pizza.**

**There was a flurry of snow as young people arrived, courtesy of a snow machine organised by the Engage Connor Youth team who wanted to make sure the atmosphere was just right!**

**Adding to the festive scene was the wide selection Christmas jumpers worn by the young people and their leaders!**

**The evening kicked off with games including a giant pass the parcel, musical statues, and horses, knights and cavaliers. The EVENT's Bible element took the form of three dramatic monologues ('Play it By Ear' Drama Productions) and the Rev Peter Ferguson lead an epilogue on the theme of Hope.**

**Music was provided by Mark Ferguson and his band.**



At the concert in Jordanstown are, from left: The Rev Canon Nigel Baylor, rector; Thomas Hogg, Mayor of Newtownabbey; Jonathan Rea and Etta Halliday, New Irish Arts; and the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, curate.

## Recalling sacrifice

As part of the 100th anniversary commemorations of World War I, St Patrick's, Jordanstown, hosted a concert with the New Irish Choir and Orchestra called 'Greater Love.'

The concert, on November 7, included music and true stories reflecting on the lives of Irish men and women who gave so much for others from 1914-1918.

Jordanstown curate the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, said: "The event brought together people from across the community at this important time, helping us all appreciate the sacrifice made by those at war and those left at home."

The concert raised £800 for the Whiteabbey Branch of the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal.



Zoe Holman on her 100th birthday with the Rev Paul Dundas and Bishop Alan Abernethy.

## Happy birthday Zoe!

Mrs Zoe Holman, a parishioner at Christ Church, Lisburn, celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 26.

Her visitors included the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, her rector the Rev Paul Dundas, and the Mothers' Union.

Zoe had a long chat with Bishop Alan. "Zoe is a delightful lady with a very positive outlook on life, a twinkle in her eye and a great sense of fun," said the Bishop.

"It is a joy to meet people like Zoe who have lived a full life and remain so faithful and gracious."

# Friends of St Anne's seek new members

The organisation known as the Friends of Belfast Cathedral is older than the Cathedral itself!

First established in November 1896, three years before the foundation stone to the current Cathedral was even laid, the organisation was originally known as The Belfast Cathedral Guild. Its aim was to encourage an interest in building Belfast Cathedral in the parishes of the United Dioceses of Down and Connor and Dromore and further afield.

Many members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and of the aristocracy throughout Ireland subscribed to this aim and the Nave was first opened for worship in 1904.

The Friends continued to raise considerable funds for many more of the building projects that lay ahead, including the organ in 1907, completion of the Crypt and completion of the West Front and installation of its bronze doors.

The Chapel of the Holy Spirit was built in 1932 and the Apse and Ambulatory completed in 1959. The South and North Transepts were added later. The most recent addition was the Spire of Hope, erected in 2007.

Before 1948, the Belfast Cathedral Guild evolved into The Friends of Belfast Cathedral. The group has been involved in smaller projects such as the Columbarium, and more recently contributed to the Titanic Memorial Pall and new choir robes.

The objectives of the Friends today are to raise funds to help the Dean and Board preserve the fabric of the Cathedral, and

to help promote public interest in the Cathedral, its history and its work.

As the committee of the Friends of Belfast Cathedral looks to the future, it invites more people to join and help preserve this beautiful place of worship.

Running costs at Belfast Cathedral amount to £1,200-£1,300 per day, not including capital building costs.

Membership of the Friends begins at just £15 a year and life membership is £200.

Joan Thompson, the organisation's honorary secretary, said being a Friend gave her 'a sense of awe' in supporting the vision of her predecessors.

"St Anne's is a living, working place of welcome and worship. Members of The Friends, from different churches, enjoy a sense of fellowship associated with this Cathedral and appreciate the recognition of the support given by them to the many projects necessary in the maintenance of furnishings and fabrics," Joan said

"We would welcome new members to help us in this work. Our sense of cohesion is enhanced through gathering together for two pilgrimages each year."

A pilgrimage to Kells, County Meath, is being planned for May 2015.

More information on the Friends of Belfast Cathedral is available on the Cathedral website [www.belfastcathedral.org](http://www.belfastcathedral.org).



Members of The Friends of Belfast Cathedral at their 2014 AGM.





Lisa Carson, whose home parish is St Paul's, Lisburn, outside Belfast's Waterfront Hall during the Northern Ireland leg of the 41st African Children's Choir tour. Lisa was a volunteer singing teacher with the choir.

# Lisa's joyful year with children's choir

Music graduate Lisa Carson brought an all singing, all dancing group of friends with her when she visited her home parish of St Paul's, Lisburn, on December 14.

Lisa was nearing the end of a year as a volunteer singing teacher with the 41<sup>st</sup> African Children's Choir which was touring Northern Ireland, having already toured in 10 American states including Alaska, and four of Canada's western provinces.

The 23-year-old is daughter of the rector of St Paul's, the Rev Canon Jim Carson, and his wife Heather.

When she was studying at Edinburgh University, Lisa saw the African Children's Choir in concert, and was so captivated by the experience she wanted to be part of it. "My degree was in music and I felt that

God had given me the skills to become involved," Lisa said.

The choir was founded 30 years ago. Its first tour raised enough money to fund a children's home. A second choir was raised from the home, and every year one, sometimes two choirs go on tour. The choir's parent body, Music for Life, works in seven African countries.

The charity offers continuing care, education and development of returning choir children, and to date over a thousand vulnerable children have been through the choir programme. The funds they have

generated have provided the opportunity of education and hope for thousands more.

"This project is all about unlocking the potential of children and taking them out of darkness, poverty and hardship and giving them hope and education," Lisa said.

"They are energetic, enthusiastic, joyful and thankful for everything they have. They have such loving hearts for God."

Lisa said her year with the choir had been an amazing experience, but admitted being on the road isn't as glamorous as some might think. "It can be quite tough, I live out of a suitcase as we are constantly on the move and stay in four different places a week, but God has blessed me in all sorts of different ways and I can see that in everything I do," she said.

The 18 children in Choir 41 are all from Uganda and their ages range from eight to 12.

Anyone who has seen a concert by the African Children's Choir cannot be but amazed by the sheer joy in the children's faces when they run out onto the stage, a joy that continues throughout each concert.

Lisa said such joy comes naturally to these children. "Some of them are from difficult family backgrounds," she said. "But they are joyful children, they are loud and happy and like many Africans they are very dramatic! They know how much joy their music brings to people and always want to do their best."

Lisa is normally backstage during a concert, but was asked to speak to the audience when the choir performed in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast, and conducted it when it sang in St Paul's.

Choir 41's tour finished in the third week in January, and its members returned home. For Lisa that meant saying goodbye to the children who will continue their education at the African Children's Choir Primary School.

Lisa said there had been many high points over the year. "We produced a CD called Immanuel God with Us and I taught the children the songs that are on it. When I heard it for the first time, it made me so proud of the kids," she said.

"But every night when I see them run out onto the stage to the beat of the drums, their faces lit up with joy, it is an incredible feeling."

To learn more about the African Children's Choir visit <https://africanchildrenschoir.org.uk/>.

## Priory Singers' Memorial Evensong for former Cathedral organist Harry Grindle

The late Harry Grindle was honoured by the chamber choir he founded in a special Memorial Evensong in St Anne's Cathedral on November 16.

The preacher was Bishop Edward Darling, and the service was sung by the Priory Singers, founded by Harry in 1986. Director Robert Thompson said it was a fitting way to acknowledge his immense contribution to church music.

Harry was organist at Willowfield Parish and later in St Comgall's, Bangor, before returning to Belfast

in 1964 to become Organist and Master of the Choristers in St Anne's Cathedral.

"Through the standard of its music, Belfast Cathedral began to make a marked impact on the wider community," said Bishop Darling.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, said the large congregation at the Memorial Evensong had appreciated some fine music and an act of worship that was in keeping with many Harry himself would have produced.



The Nepal team in Kathmandu.

# Team sees prayers answered in Nepal

A team from two parishes in Connor Diocese visited Nepal in January. **Alan Robinson**, a parishioner from St Patrick's, Coleraine, gives an account of the trip, which was facilitated by CMS Ireland. For security reasons, we can only print initials when referring to the church in Nepal and those who work for it.

It's never too late to go on a CMSI META team for the first time. I have just discovered this at the age of 64. But then Nepal is a special place to visit.

The Nepal META team of 2015 from St Brigid's, Glengormley, and St Patrick's, Coleraine, brought greetings from Ireland and led seminars on basic Christianity for SD church in Kathmandu.

The church, which welcomes and cares for the disabled, was started by BK, a disabled man, almost 20 years ago. Now, BK is assisted by his wife and a team of elders, and the church is full each Saturday.

We attended the Saturday service, which was as usual led by BK, the pastor. The congregation were seated on rugs or in wheelchairs. Bill Boyce preached and was translated by B, the pastor's son. Whether the great reception was due to Bill's excellent Bible exposition or to B's exuberant translation, we will never know!

Two of our team had been here before, but this was the first time they had seen the new building for the church's compassion ministry, SS. They noticed that, although the facilities are much improved from the old carpet factory that used to house the church, the spirit and feel of the place remain.

The building surrounds a courtyard on three sides to give a small village atmosphere, which makes the patients feel at home and helps them socialise. Even in January, everyone lives outside, talking, eating, making crafts and jewellery, and the children play happily.

The main work of SS is the PN Programme. Patients from outlying districts requiring specialist treatment arrive in Kathmandu and are brought to the hospital and navigated through the system. After treatment, they recuperate in the new building that can now house up to 50 patients and their carers. While there, they

hear about Jesus and many want to learn more. In this way the church has now sent the Gospel message to 64 of the 75 districts of Nepal.

The team also got to see, hear and smell life in Kathmandu in all its rich diversity. Small motorbikes are more numerous than cars. The record was a family of four on one! The tailor uses his sewing machine on the pavement. On the butcher's counter, open to the street, a goat's head eyes us suspiciously each time we pass. The policeman at the junction is ignored as he gives cursory waves at the traffic and everyone fights their way through.

This is a young city with many students and there is a lively buzz. This atmosphere is enhanced by the white-capped Himalayas visible from the centre of the city.

Going to church at the Leprosy Colony near Kathmandu should be on everyone's bucket list. The walk there alone was an experience on a rough track past neat fields worked by hand, mostly by the women. Many are terraced and irrigated for crops of rice, vegetables and even potatoes. We passed craftsmen weaving, doing basket work, quilt making, wood carving and even making metal idols of Hindu gods. The scenery is beautiful with mountains all around.

Near the end of the walk there is a long suspension foot bridge, think Carrick-a-Rede on steroids! Two of the team had



never before plucked up the courage to cross it. The irony was that we were followed across by an older man riding his motorbike at a good speed!

We were welcomed at the church and given rugs up front to sit on. Singing was 'a cappella' and very enthusiastic. John McCammon spoke to the 60 or more folks present on John 3:16, translated as usual by B, which was very well received.

It was very moving to see hands raised in worship with misshapen or missing fingers or someone with no fingers deftly flicking the pages in their Bible. After the service, some people requested prayer for healing from the team. The younger generations in the colony mostly have never had leprosy and the older folk are now ex-lepers, but many are disabled because of the disease.

The leaders' seminars we came to Nepal to teach were held over four days. Some of the participants had long, difficult journeys from distant parts of Nepal, taking over a week to reach us. There were about 47 at the seminars. The team always got an enthusiastic reception with 'Jaimassee' as the greeting, said with hands pressed together in front of the chest. This means 'Jesus is the Messiah.' They loved to worship before every session and pray loudly together after.

Due to a strike on the second day, instead of taking taxis, the half-dozen participants in wheelchairs had to be pushed or push themselves about a mile and a half, some of it steeply uphill, to the venue. No-one complained.

Those attending were split fairly evenly between the genders. Women in church leadership in Nepal is a recent development, with G, BK's wife, being an excellent role model. She often preaches, prays or starts the worship.

As the seminars went on, enthusiasm, and questions for us, increased. At the last session we had the privilege of praying for each person individually. The feedback given to SD leaders by the participants was very positive. The illiterate folk used to an oral tradition appeared to be better at retaining information than the literate who had taken notes.

After the seminars, we attended both churches again on Saturday and Sunday. Wonderful worship and a great welcome.

Then it was off to Pokhara, west of Kathmandu, for the team retreat. It is in a beautiful setting with a lake and views of the distant Himalayas. It was a great time of refreshment and allowed us to process all we had experienced.



Team members head away from Kathmandu into the Nepalese countryside to visit the church at the Leprosy Colony, which proved a moving experience.



Members of the team from St Brigid's, Glengormley, and St Patrick's, Coleraine, take a walk around the streets of Kathmandu, Nepal.

In discussions everyone was very positive about how the seminars had gone, about SD church and its leadership team and about how well we, as a team, had gelled. Our different gifts and skills had complemented one another.

From Pokhara, we all made it safely home.

When you think of how good the travel was, how short and minor the illnesses were, how well the seminars were received, how the strikes failed to stop us, how much love we received from the folks we met, you will understand that we have a great God who answers prayer. Thank you to all who prayed for us and thank you to

all at CMSI who made it happen.

**The Nepal team comprised Alan Robinson and Canon John McCammon from St Patrick's, Coleraine, and the Rev Bill Boyce, Nevin Kidd, Eleanor Boyce and Peter Kirch, all from St Brigid's, Glengormley.**

Peter, who took these photographs, said: "The trip was an incredible experience, both educating and eye-opening. I had the opportunity to see God at work in Nepal, and it was a pleasure to meet our brothers and sisters in Christ."



At the 175th anniversary service in St Mary Magdalene on December 1 are, from left: Peter Ainley, warden; the Rev Dr Bob Cotter, Priest-in-Charge; the Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Belfast; the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor; the Very Rev John Bond, Dean of Connor; and Church Warden Hugh Rodgers.

# St Mary Magdalene marks 175 years

The Parish of St Mary Magdalene, Donegall Pass, Belfast, celebrated its 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the end of last year with a number of events including a Mission with Bishop Ken Clarke.

Other highlights were a special anniversary service on December 1 with the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, preaching, a parish dinner, a Youth Talent Show and a Family Service with Bishop Ken.

The Parish of St Mary Magdalene was established as the Ulster Magdalene Asylum and Episcopal Chapel and formally opened on Advent Sunday, December 1 1839.

The Parish has contributed to this area of south Belfast in diverse ways since those early days. At a public meeting held in the Exchange Rooms, Belfast, on October 1 1833, chaired by the Rev John Kinahan, Rector of Knockbreda, a number of resolutions were passed, including the following: "That when we consider the circumstances of Belfast, which is daily rising in importance and increasing in population, we cannot but desire the establishment of an asylum for unfortunate females for the town of Belfast, and counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh and Tyrone, to be an object of great importance."

In spring 1849 the asylum was opened for the reception of women, with dormitories holding 50 beds. Accommodation was also provided for the employment of the women, and for the laundering of linen. Due to financial pressures the asylum was closed in 1916. Since opening, it had offered shelter, maintenance, employment, instruction and encouragement to more than 3,000 women, to whom 'its benefits were at all times afforded freely and irrespective of religious denomination.'

The parish also played a substantial role in educating the people of south Belfast. It operated its own schoolhouse in Shaftesbury Square from 1853 to 1888. In addition, the Charlotte Street schoolhouse was opened in 1870. In this building the 1<sup>st</sup> Irish BB Company was set up by William McVicker on December 31 1888. The church purchased another building in Hardcastle Street in 1890 and this became known as the Magdalene National School. It was transferred to the Belfast Education authority in 1927 as a Public Elementary School, and closed in 1957.

The BB Company continues to this day



Church Warden Hugh Rodgers helps the Rev Dr Bob Cotter cut the anniversary cake.

and was central to the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of the Boys' Brigade. A live broadcast on Radio Ulster took place on September 8 2013 and the Belfast Battalion held its own service in the church on April 13 2014.

Up until the 1980s St Mary Magdalene was filled to capacity and was the hub of the social life of the local community. In addition to the Boys' Brigade, Girl Guides and Brownies, youth and badminton clubs thrived, as well as Men's Clubs, Ladies' Guild, Mothers' Union and Bowling Clubs. Sadly, the Troubles brought many of these to a close, but currently Boys' Brigade, Church Choir, Men's Snooker Club, Ladies'



Guild and a Thursday Lunch Club meet regularly. The latter holds a service at 12.30 every Thursday, followed by lunch. Sunday worship is at 11am.

Apart from its own activities, the parish continues to perform key social functions. It contributes to the South Belfast Food Bank, runs its famous Big Breakfasts on the second Saturdays in May and November, and hires out rehearsal space to many local groups including the Ulster Operatic, NI Opera, and others. Countless local school pupils have taken their Associated Board exams in the Magdalene halls. In addition, the 1<sup>st</sup> BB Old Boys' Silver Band, which was set up in the parish, continues to perform and compete.

The parish is anxious to continue to play a prominent role in south Belfast, spiritually and socially. A former parishioner – the late Dixie Gilmore – went on to become Lord Mayor of Belfast, and a number of former parishioners have also gone on to ordained ministry in the Church of Ireland.

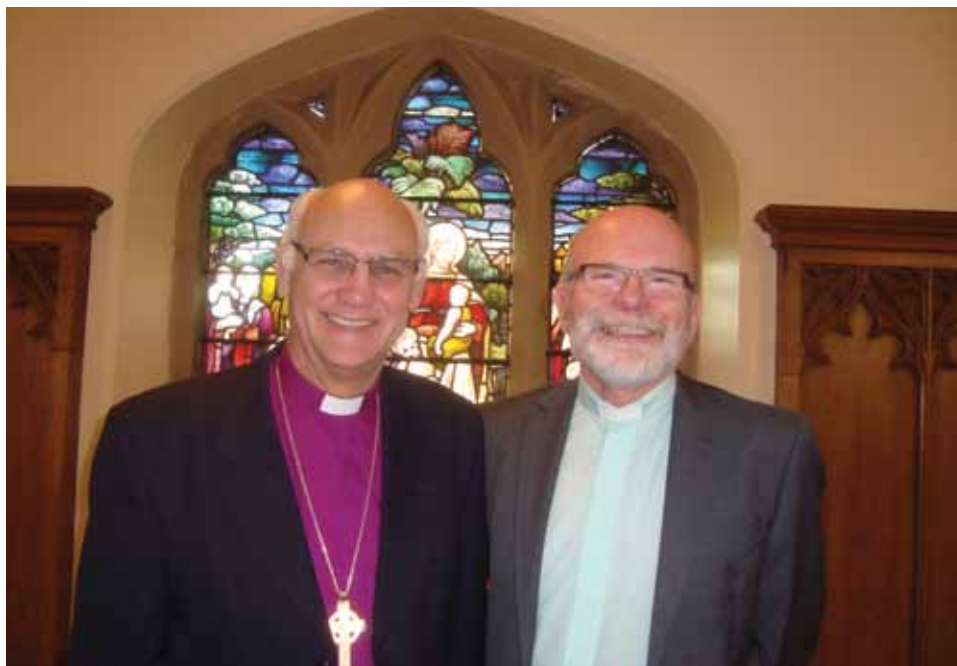
The latest multi-media equipment has been installed in the main church building and hall in recent months. Further updating of

facilities is planned to more appropriately meet the needs of the modern age.

The parish is keen to develop further the links it is re-establishing with the local community, not least through the efforts of the newly appointed Family Outreach Worker, Mrs Alison Shaw. A Parents and Toddlers Group now meets in the Hall every Thursday and other courses of benefit to parents and carers are run.

The parish is represented on the Board of Botanic Primary School and the Minister, the Rev Dr Bob Cotter, who is also a member of the Donegall Pass Community Forum, has developed closer links with the Donegall Pass Youth Club and the Community Centre, as well as with his colleagues in the Apsley Hall, Elim Church and further afield.

There are opportunities for any young people who would like to be involved in the life of the parish by contributing to worship, education and outreach in this inner-city area which boasts a proud past and hides a great potential. This is an exciting new phase in the illustrious history of St Mary Magdalene.



Bishop Ken Clarke, who joined the parish mission to celebrate St Mary Magdalene's 175th anniversary, is pictured with Priest-in-Charge the Rev Dr Bob Cotter.

## Scout celebrations at St Bartholomew's

Celebrations were held to mark the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the 81st Belfast Scout Troop at St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis.

They began with a Service of Thanksgiving in the church which was filled with squirrels, beavers, cubs and scouts, who were joined by past members, family and the District Commissioner Ian Stewart.

The rector of St Bartholomew's, the Rev Kevin Graham, spoke about reflecting God's light through our lives and thanked the boys and girls for their contributions to the South Belfast Food Bank collection.

A birthday party took place in the hall where old photos and a poster exhibition of the Scout movement since its foundation were on display.



War veteran Tommy Jess.

## Tommy finally gets Ushakov Medal

After 70 years of waiting, Lisburn war veteran Tommy Jess says he is 'over the moon' to finally be awarded the Russian Ushakov Medal for his role in the Arctic Convoys.

On October 31, 91-year-old Tommy, a parishioner of Christ Church, Lisburn, finally received the medal recognising the pivotal role he played in World War Two when he attended a special ceremony in Belfast.

Tommy, whose moving wartime story featured in the Summer 2014 issue of Connor Connections, received a letter from the Russian Embassy nearly four years ago to say they would like to confer the medal on him, but this was vetoed by the British Government.

That veto was overturned in the House of Commons in October, and Tommy's 70 year wait was over.

Tommy's medals include the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, the Defence Medal, the War Medal and the Arctic Star.

Tommy lost many friends in the war – more than 160 died on one day alone when his ship, the HMS Lapwing, was torpedoed in March 1945.

"A lot of years ago I could have talked more about it, now I get very emotional," said Tommy. "But I am nearly 92-years-old and I am over the moon to finally be awarded this medal."

## Antrim Rural Dean

The Rev Derek Kerr, rector of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion, has been appointed Rural Dean of Antrim. He takes over from the Rev Paul Redfern, and his appointment came into effect on January 1 2015.



## Canon speaks to Lay Readers in Tanzania

The rector of St Paul's, Lisburn, the Rev Canon Jim Carson, was a speaker at a conference for Diocesan Lay Readers held in Arusha, Tanzania, in September.

Jim was invited by Bishop Gaddiel Lenini, Bishop of Kajiado Diocese in Kenya, and his visit was facilitated by CMS Ireland.

"The purpose of the conference was for the Lay Readers in particular to receive encouragement and confidence in their roles," Jim said. "It was also about relationships, their own relationships with each other, and many had been touched by teams from the Church of Ireland in times past and these relationships were remembered and cherished."



Canon James Carson with Kajiado Lay Readers at Arusha, Tanzania, in September.

Jim also visited Imberikani where St Paul's facilitated the building of a new church; the Archdeaconry of Magadi; and Entasopia, an area Kajiado Diocese wishes to develop in the future.

"This was a worthwhile visit further developing partnership between Ireland and the church in Kenya, meeting and speaking to clergy and people, and helping to equip local Christians in mission," Jim said.

## New Eco resource

Eco-Congregation Ireland has launched a new resource to encourage Christians to become more eco-aware and eco-active at church and at home.

The resource includes data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fifth assessment report as well as a comprehensive theological response to climate change, prayers for the environment and advice on how to reduce one's carbon footprint – as an individual and as a congregation.

For further information – and to download Climate Change - Can I Make a Difference? visit [www.ecocongregationireland.com](http://www.ecocongregationireland.com).



Julie Hooke at Messy Church in St Andrew's, Glencairn, with her daughter and two grandchildren.



Elise, Demi, Carla, Jackson and Glebewarden Ken Courtney.



Deep in concentration doing crafts at Messy Church.



After activities and worship it is time for tea.



Sofia loving the dancing during worship.



Gillian Rice and 14-month-old Katie Nesbitt.



The Rev Emma Rutherford leads energetic praise.





Messy Church guarantees fun in a safe environment for all ages.



Thumbs up for Messy Church from Reece!

# Lots of fun at Messy Church in Glencairn!

St Andrew's, Glencairn, is one of a number of Connor parishes to introduce Messy Church as a way of engaging with families with young children.

Messy Church is Christ centred and offers all age fun, normally at a time of day to suit families, who come together to enjoy a time of creativity, celebration and refreshments.

The Parish Hall at Glencairn was a sea of smiles and colour on Wednesday November 12 as families gathered for the monthly Messy Church meeting.

Run by the Rev Emma Rutherford, Curate with Special Responsibilities in Glencairn, assisted by Connor Children's Project Development Officer Jill Hamilton and a group of enthusiastic volunteers, Messy Church is now established on the community calendar in this part of north Belfast.

Primary School children, toddlers and even babies enjoyed rolling up their sleeves and getting stuck into painting, crafts, cookery and games in the hall, before moving into the church for a fun filled worship session which involved lots of dancing, singing, a story related to the earlier activities, and prayers.

Mums and grannies joined in the fun and also took the chance to catch up with each other. Julie Hooke brings three of her children, aged eight, five and four, and comes along with her daughter who brings her own children, a three-year-old boy and three-month-old baby Sophie. Three generations having fun together!

"It's a great place to get together with

friends and know that the children are safe and learning about Jesus," said Julie. "Sometimes we get stuck into making things, we are in the middle of it all just as much as the kids and we get as much enjoyment out of it as they do."

Kellie Neill is at Messy Church with 16-month-old Sofia. "She loves coming here to play," said Kellie. "We come along to church sometimes too. It is great to get the wee ones out."

Little Katie Nesbitt, aged 14 months, is having a great time with some pens. "This is good for them and gets us out," said mum Gillian Rice. "We come along to St Andrew's for the mums and toddlers group too."

Elise Brammer and James Mateer, two interns at The Hub at Queen's University, are among the volunteers helping out at Messy Church. "It's really great, I love it," said Elise, who has also been helping run the recently launched Glencairn Community Choir.

"Getting out into the community like this is especially good for students who can end up living in a bit of a bubble."

James said Messy Church is not about preaching to anyone. "A lot of kids and families come along who may not be involved in a church, and it is a great opportunity to get a message across and for them to have fun at the same time."



Kellie Neill with little Sofia.

After worship, Messy Church moves back to the hall where everyone enjoys a meal together before it is time for home.

Rev Emma said: "The number of people who come along to Messy Church is phenomenal and there is a great buzz and atmosphere in the hall.

"Other events like our parent and toddler group, the JAM Service, our new community choir and the Lighthouse drop-in are getting bigger and bigger. Getting people coming in and building relationships with them is very encouraging."

The last word must go to one of the Messy Church's young participants. Reece, aged six, says he comes every month. What does he like about it? "It's messy!" he exclaims. Well of course....

Jill Hamilton is Messy Church Co-ordinator for Northern Ireland. To find out more about Messy Church, email Jill on [jill@connor.anglican.org](mailto:jill@connor.anglican.org).

## Billy Parish Church plans events to mark 200th anniversary

Billy Parish in Bushmills celebrates its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The current church was built in 1815, but the earliest record goes back to 1305 with the taxation of Pope Nicholas IV when the parish was valued at £36, a high valuation suggesting the parish was large and prosperous.

Today Billy's claim to fame is that the parish includes Northern Ireland's only World Heritage site, the Giant's Causeway.

Events planned to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> year in the life of the parish church include a special service on Mothering Sunday (March 15) when the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, will celebrate with the congregation.

A wedding dress festival is planned for September 12-13, and the year will end with a Christmas tree festival in December.

## Sadie celebrates 100!

Congratulations to Sadie Redpath a parishioner of St Cedma's, Larne, who celebrated her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on October 15.

Sadie enjoyed a special party hosted by her family and friends. A large number of parishioners joined with Sadie's family to wish her God's blessing on what was a very special occasion.



Celebrating Sadie Redpath's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday are, from left: Son-in-law Hugh Gentleman, daughter-in-law Jackie, the Rev Jim Caldwell, Sadie (with her card from the Queen) Archdeacon Stephen Forde (rector) and Sadie's daughter Rosemary Gentleman.

## A great day at Reveal

Young people from across Connor Diocese had a fantastic day at Reveal, hosted by St Jude's Muckamore Youth Group, on Saturday October 4.

Reveal looked at how God can be real in everyone's daily lives. There was worship, Bible teaching, fun and fellowship, singing, poetry, crafts, a BBQ, human foosball and even a bucking bronco!



The Rev John Medhurst and Charlie Watson about to celebrate the Eucharist at the Quiet Day in St George's in November. Inset: Image of St Francis.

# Franciscans' Third Order in Connor

The Third Order held a quiet day in St George's, Belfast, on November 29, attended by members of the Order from Connor Diocese. **Jeni McAughey** writes about the origins and aims of this Order.

The Third Order is a worldwide Anglican Franciscan Religious Order of men and women from a wide variety of backgrounds. We commit ourselves to leading our lives according to a Rule of Life, while living in our own homes, working in the community and caring for our families.

The Aims of the Order are:

- To make our Lord Jesus Christ known and loved everywhere.
- To spread the spirit of love and harmony.
- To live simply.

Francis himself founded the Third Order for lay people who wished to live according to a Franciscan Rule of Life, without becoming members of the First Order. The majority of Third Order Franciscans in Northern Ireland live in Connor Diocese and we would welcome new members. We feel that Franciscan teaching has great deal to offer our church today and would like to highlight a few areas.

1/ The rule or guide to daily living:-

Making a commitment in writing is an important discipline and it has helped many of us greatly in making sure we take time daily, and at regular intervals during the day, for prayer. The regular quiet days and annual retreat ensure we take some time to reflect on our spiritual life. The quiet days are held in St George's Church in Belfast, and next year the annual retreat will be in Drumalis in Larne.

2/ Care for creation:-



Shelagh Livingston, speaker at the Quiet Day in November, and Freda Keys, local contact for the Third Order.

The Franciscan care for the whole world, for all of creation and all creatures seems to be vital and should be one of the most important messages the church needs to share. Discussing climate change and being willing to make changes in our church communities to address this would send a very strong signal to the world, especially to young people.

3/ Rejection of consumerism:-

Francis took a strict vow of poverty which we accept we could never emulate, but it is in sharp contrast to the increased emphasis on getting and spending in our society. The principles of the Third Order counsel us to reject luxury and waste.

We believe the Franciscan way of life has a great deal to offer us as a church and we feel the emphasis on the practical and the call for action appeals to our outlook in the Church of Ireland. Someone has said that the Third Order of the Society of St Francis is the Anglican Church's best kept secret! For further details please contact Freda Keys 02893378707, email freda.keys@googlemail.com





The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, congratulates Ken Tate on completing his 140km fundraising run in Madagascar.

# Madagascar race for superfit sexton Ken!

Superfit Ken Tate, Sexton at St George's Parish Church, Belfast, is no stranger to a tough physical challenge and last September completed a 140km run in Madagascar.

The race, covering six stages over seven days and taking in the second highest peak in Madagascar, was no bother for marathon man Ken, who has already completed numerous ultra marathons and adventure races.

Ken was raising funds for The Joseph Project, a counselling service based at St George's, and incorporating Men to Men.

To train for the Madagascar challenge, Ken was running up to 75 miles a week, supplementing his training with cross training, cycling and weights.

Belfast born and bred, Ken has been Sexton in St George's since 2000. "I worked with Men to Men for a number of years," he said. "There are a lot of counselling services out there for women, but in the past there was not much for men.

"When I was invited to take part in the Madagascar race I thought it would be a nice idea to raise a bit of funding for the Joseph Project."

Ken took up running in his forties, and did his first marathon in Belfast. Since then, he has participated in marathons, adventure races and ultra marathons around the world, including 100km races in Mongolia and Mali, a 140km run in the Sahara and the Everest Marathon in 2007.

"I don't favour the city marathons so much as they take a greater toll on me than the mountains," Ken said. "Running along a beautiful mountain trail is a lot easier on your hips and back than running on pavements and tarmac."

He said his toughest challenge was the Everest Marathon. "We trekked to Everest Base Camp over the course of 20 days so we could acclimatize to the altitude, then we ran back down in eight hours."

The total descent was a full marathon distance, 42.2km, and there had been a blizzard at base camp the night before. "It is really very dangerous up there," Ken said. "Conditions can be difficult, but we had our own medical team which was

very important. During the day it could be quite pleasant but at night the temperature dropped. One night it was minus 18 and we were sleeping under canvas."

He faced different conditions in Mongolia, where the Sunrise to Sunset ultra marathon took place during the country's brief summer, covering 100km in one day.

The adventure race in Mali, west Africa, was run over six stages on varying terrain, while the Sahara run was another staged event. "We had to run in deep sand on a couple of stages, while other parts were quite mountainous," Ken explained.

Ken is now contemplating what his next ultra adventure challenge might be!



Happy birthday to Mrs Elsa McClelland, a parishioner at Larne and Inver with Glyn and Raloo, who celebrated her 100th birthday with a party on January 25.

# Celebrating 60 years of witness and ministry in Greenisland

The Church of the Holy Name celebrated 60 years of witness and ministry in Greenisland in 2014 with three events organised by the Select Vestry.

During Lent the parish welcomed a different speaker to midweek services. They included Bishop Ken Clarke and Geoff Hamilton from South American Mission Society, Judith Cairns from Love for Life, Mary Good from International Justice Mission and Archdeacon David McClay from Willowfield Parish Church.

An anniversary service on September 7 concluded with refreshments, and centenarian Lily Moore cut the cake. Lily had celebrated her 100th birthday with a visit from the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and her rector Rev Paul Lyons. The finale of the anniversary year was a spectacular Christmas Tree

Festival with the theme 'Light & Life to All He Brings.' Claire McCollum, presenter of Songs of Praise and Proms at the Titanic, opened the festival on December 4 and hundreds of people visited over the next three days.

The rector said: "As we begin the New Year this message of Jesus being the one who brings 'light and life to all' remains our major focus for the next 60 years!"



Mrs Lily Moore, aged 100, cutting the cake after the Church of the Holy Name's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary service.

## Connor's Kids Big Adventure Days are a great success

More than 210 children and 75 leaders attended three Kids Big Adventure Days organised in October by Connor Children's Project Officer Jill Hamilton during October.

They took place in Ballymoney, Jordanstown Parish Halls, and St Paul's Church Hall, Lisburn.

The theme of the days was 'The Big Step,' and through a variety of media, including music, craft and games, the children were encouraged to take a step of faith towards Jesus – Fully Relying On God – or FROG for short.

To illustrate this, they heard the story from the Bible telling how Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the water to Jesus.

Then it was hands on, as everyone got stuck into making bunting. On stage, there was a full programme,



Frogs with a message at the Kids Big Adventure Day in Ballymoney.

including 'silly warm up songs,' drama, praise songs with lots of energetic actions, and puppets.

The children also enjoyed craft workshops and had the chance to read prayers they had written themselves. Visit the Ripple Connor website [www.rippleconnor.org.uk](http://www.rippleconnor.org.uk) for lots of photos of the three Kids Big Adventure Days.

## Cathedral library catalogue online

A catalogue listing books ancient, rare and modern kept in the library of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, is now available online. The catalogue was compiled by two interns from Queen's University last summer.

Their work can now be downloaded from the Cathedral website, allowing anyone searching for an old or rare theological book to check the library's collection with just the click of a mouse.

The book can then be easily located in the library which is open to visitors daily. To arrange to visit the library, please ring St Anne's Cathedral on 028 9032 8332.

## Oldest man in NI title for Billy (106)

Congratulations to Jordanstown parishioner Billy Noble who celebrated his 106<sup>th</sup> birthday on January 5, and was officially named the oldest man in Northern Ireland.





Pictured after the unveiling of the Blue Plaque for Dean Sammy Crooks are, from left: The Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor; Chris Spurr, Ulster History Circle; the Very Rev John Mann, Dean of Belfast and current Black Santa; Sam Crooks, son of Dean Crooks, who unveiled the Plaque; and Lord Eames, former Archbishop of Armagh and a close friend of Dean Crooks (pictured inset).

# Blue Plaque erected in honour of Belfast's first Black Santa

A man who made 'the vision of the living Christ a reality' in the heart of Belfast has been commemorated by a Blue Plaque at St Anne's Cathedral.

The Plaque remembers Belfast's first Black Santa, Dean Sammy Crooks, who began the Christmas Sit-out for charities in 1976, establishing a tradition which has continued for almost four decades.

The Blue Plaque was erected by the Ulster History Circle and was unveiled by Dean Crooks' son Sam Crooks on December 12.

Dean Crooks died in a road accident in 1986, not long after retiring from the Cathedral where he had been Dean for 15 years. Former Archbishop of Armagh, Lord Robin Eames, who spoke at the unveiling, knew Dean Crooks well.

"He took no prisoners... He was determined and had a vision of what the Cathedral could stand for in the life of this city," Lord Eames said.

"His living memorial is not a plaque, his living memory is a man before his time who

hit on the idea of giving this city, in times of tremendous suffering, a new light. He was a man who made the vision of the living Christ a reality in the heart of this city."

Guests were welcomed to the unveiling by Chris Spurr, Chairman of the Ulster History Circle.

Sam Crooks extended apologies on behalf of his mother, Isobel, who is 91 and was not able to travel from her home in England. The Blue Plaque had given her 'immense pride and pleasure,' Sam said.

Thanking the Ulster History Circle, the Cathedral Board and those who had made the commemoration possible, Sam said his father would have welcomed the continuation of the sit-out at the Cathedral. "He loved this place. It was where he started his ministry and where he finished it," Sam said.

Dean Crooks believed the role of the

church and clergy was to proclaim the Gospel, Sam added. "He would quote the Epistle of James: 'What does it profit a man though he says he has faith, but he has not works. Faith, if it has not works, is dead. I will show ye my faith, by my works.' To my father, the sit-out was a proclamation of faith and of the Gospel."

Sam said his father attributed the success of the sit-out to the 'astonishing generosity of the people of Northern Ireland, even in the middle of the Troubles.'

"I see this Blue Plaque as not just commemorating my father, but also that generosity. I believe the Plaque will be a tribute to the continuing work of this great Cathedral and a tribute also to that great man who got it all started 39 years ago," Sam concluded.

Following the unveiling, today's Black Santa wheeled his barrel to the Cathedral steps to start an extended 11-day sit-out that raised £186,000. The funds were distributed to local charities at the annual Good Samaritans Service on February 1.

# Count Your Blessings

This Lent, Christian Aid invites you to journey with Count Your Blessings into the wilderness of rural Ethiopia, where it is enormously hard to scrape a living in a barren landscape, where women have to walk many miles to fetch water to provide for their families.

As Jesus did, during Lent we often try to follow a spiritual discipline of prayer and reflection on what it might mean for us to love God and to love our neighbours; to think about the cost of discipleship. Some Christians fast or abstain from luxuries or treats.

To help Christians reflect throughout Lent on our many blessings, Christian Aid has created the Count Your Blessings resource providing a series of bite size reflections to inspire and a variety of prayers, actions and donation ideas to help transform lives of some of the



Bokiya (right) was saved from an early marriage when she was 13 by Elema Dulacha (left) and is able to continue her education. Thanks to Elema and the work of Christian Aid partner HUNDEE other young marriages in Ethiopia are being prevented.

poorest people in the world.

Christian Aid's Count Your Blessings resource can be downloaded through the website at [www.christianaid.ie/lent](http://www.christianaid.ie/lent) or you can telephone Belfast (028) 9064 8133. Count Your Blessings is also available for your smart phone or tablet - search 'Count Your Blessings' in your app store today.

# Give thanks this Lent

Our Count Your Blessings app will give you daily bite-size reflections on your smart phone or tablet throughout Lent.

Download the free app and join us in prayer, action and giving to help transform lives.

Search for 'Count Your Blessings' in your app store today.

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