

CONNOR

connections

**Kids' Big
Adventures**

Two fun-filled days

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Evensong in Holy Trinity, Woodburn

The Choir of St Anne's Cathedral sang Evensong in Holy Trinity Parish Church, Woodburn, on January 10.

This was the first time Holy Trinity, Woodburn, has held a Service of Choral Evensong, and the Cathedral Choir was invited by the rector, the Rev Dr Alan McCann. "We see it as a means to reach out to some people in our own community of Woodburn Parish who appreciate this form of music and worship and whom we are seeking to reach with the good news of Christ," Alan said.

He said he also wanted to support Dean John Mann and the Cathedral in reaching out to the community in Belfast through the Choir School Programme.

Dean Mann said: "The service of Evensong was well received, there was a tangible sense of devotion as one would expect from a Church of Ireland congregation.

"The experience for the choir to sing in a different acoustic is always valuable too."



The Rev Dr Alan McCann, rector of Woodburn, welcomes Dean John Mann and St Anne's Master of the Choristers, David Stevens.

Conifer Calendar festival in Billy

A Christmas tree festival at Billy Parish Church, Bushmills, concluded with a packed carol service on December 13.

The festival had the theme 'Conifer Calendar,' and visitors could buy gifts and enjoy refreshments after viewing a wonderful array of creative Christmas trees.

'Prayers in the Forest' were said on Sunday at 10.30am and the concluding service had the theme 'Carols in the Forest.' The festival was in aid of Billy Parish Church Funds.

St Cedma's hampers

Larne High School presented St Cedma's Parish Church with food hampers on December 16. These were given to parishioners in need, and the parish has expressed its thanks to Larne High School.



Mr Tommy Dowds, representing Martin and Hamilton Contractors, receiving the time capsule from the Rev Gary Millar. This was placed in the church to mark the re-roofing of St Colmanell's.

Time capsule of life in Ahoghill in 2015!

A screenshot of life today has been frozen in time in a capsule secreted in the new roof of St Colmanell's Parish Church, Ahoghill.

The time capsule contains the names of parishioners and members of the local community who supported the church roof appeal – which literally raised the roof to the tune of £45,000! Alongside this list of names are some coins and their monetary value in terms of today's world, a letter from the rector, the Rev Gary Millar, and photographs of church life.

The re-roofing of the church is now complete. To help with the major cost of the work, the parish had applied for a 'Listed Places of Worship Church Roof' grant.

"We were deflated when the application was turned down, but equally happy that Portglenone's application was successful," Gary explained.

"As a result, there was not enough money to proceed with the church roof and therefore we looked into the possibility of borrowing money from the bank. After much prayer and discussions two parishioners, Linda and Jeff Kyle, came up with the idea of 'sponsoring a tile.'

'Sponsor a tile' was launched at the Parish

Fete last June and work on the roof started in July, with the aim of being finished in time for the parish's Christmas Tree Festival in November. The festival raised £15,000, with the money shared between the NI Hospice and the Church Building Fund.

While it is intended the roof will last for many years to come, some day in the future someone investigating below the eaves and tiles atop St Colmanell's may discover the time capsule and learn more than they expected to about life in Ahoghill c2015!

Grace is theme of Lent Seminars

The Bishop of Connor's annual Lent Seminar series for 2016 is underway.

This year, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy is speaking on the theme of Grace.

As usual, Bishop Alan will deliver two seminars in Jordanstown, Bushmills and Lisburn Cathedral, with the talks starting at 7.30pm each evening.

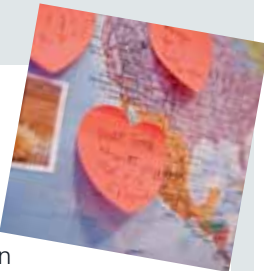
Full details on the Connor website.

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Cover photo:


Thinking about others around the world at Messy Church in Ballymena on October 18 when 177 people turned up for this ministry. Photo: Lucy McLoughlan




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

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Reflecting on climate change and refugees

It is fascinating that one of the most common conversations we share with strangers and indeed friends is around the weather. We are usually complaining about the rain and yet more rain.

Lately I have found myself wrestling with the serious and complex issue of climate change. The earth's temperature is rising and there are more unusual weather patterns.

This is an issue we must take seriously as those who see themselves as stewards of the creation God has entrusted us with. I am seeking different ways to change my own lifestyle, by using public transport instead of the car, walking instead of driving and being more aware of the electricity I use unnecessarily. These are small steps but every step we can take is important.

These are matters that we cannot afford to ignore and I am very grateful for those who raise our awareness. Each of us has a voice and we need to be sure that we can express our belief that the creation is God's gift to us all and we are to be stewards of that gift.

It has also been difficult to watch the refugee crisis unfold and the terrible human tragedy that is happening on our television screens. The desperation of families and those fleeing death, war and persecution. Tragic human stories are happening and it



The Rt Rev Alan Abernethy.

is difficult to know what we can do.

May I urge you to pray and to give generously in terms of seeking to help with basic necessities.

We need to be ready to offer some of the most important Christian gifts and those are of hospitality and welcome. There is also the possibility of lobbying the elected representatives who make decisions on our behalf which can help those who are refugees.

As we journey towards Lent and Easter it is good to take time to reflect upon our discipleship that impacts on so many issues all around us.

Grace and peace to you all,

+ Alan Abernethy



There was time for fun, games and fellowship at the Youth Leaders' Retreat.

Youth leaders focus on Psalm 71 at retreat

Youth leaders from seven parishes took part in Engage Connor Youth's Leaders' Retreat in White Park Bay on January 8/9.

The overnight stay gave those involved in leading young people in the diocese the opportunity to enjoy time away before the start of a new year of programmes

engaging with young people. Their focus was Psalm 71, God as our refuge.

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie thanked Wilson Beare and Jude Frame for leading the sessions. "I believe everyone found this an enriching and encouraging experience," she said.

Enlighten mission draws the crowds in Cloughfern

Enlighten, a mission jointly organised by the parishes of Cloughfern, St Comgall and St John & St Ninian, drew crowds of all ages to a number of events running over several days.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, and Diocesan Development Officer Trevor Douglas joined the mission which began on Wednesday October 7 and finished with a joint service in Cloughfern Parish Church on Sunday October 11.

Activities included afternoon tea in St Comgall's Church, a round of pampering hosted by Abbot's Cross Primary Schools, a talk on Old Churches of Belfast in St John's Parish Hall and a family film night in Cloughfern Parish Hall.

Whitehouse Working Men's Club hosted a Quiz Night on the Friday evening, and on the Saturday morning lads, dads and auld lads gathered for a breakfast in St John's Parish Hall.

Saturday afternoon saw children from across the diocese gather for Kids' Big Adventure in Cloughfern and the Bishop preached at the service which concluded a very successful week of mission.

New minor canons at St Anne's

St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, has doubled its number of minor canons with the appointment of the Rev Julie Bell, the Rev Simon Richardson and the Rev Roderick Smyth.

Julie, curate at Christ Church, Lisburn, Simon, Vicar of Glenraig Parish Church and Roderick, curate at St John's, Malone, will join the three existing minor canons, the Rev Stephen Fielding, the Rev Adrian Dorrian and the Rev Nigel Kirkpatrick.

Minor canons are appointed by the Cathedral primarily to undertake the role of cantor at Evensong - Choral Evensong takes place in St Anne's six days a week during term time.

Master of the Choristers David Stevens said: "The sung dialogue between clergy and choir is such an integral part of Choral Evensong, it's essential that we have strong-voiced clergy to take part, and I'm looking forward to working with the minor canons on a regular basis."



Evangelist Stephen Whitten leads prayers in St Columba's, Whiterock, before the prayer walk in north Belfast on November 24.

Praying blessing on north Belfast streets

The community around St Columba's, Whiterock, was bathed in prayer on Tuesday night, November 24, when people from different churches joined for a prayer walk, organised by Church Army evangelist Stephen Whitten.

Monthly prayer walks have been taking place in north Belfast since last August. The group meets at a different church in the Shankill area, including Shankill Methodist, Woodvale Methodist, Shalom House and St Columba's.

Stephen, from Connor Diocese's North Belfast Centre of Mission, said a prayer walk has many benefits. "It brings people from different churches together under one cause allowing us to know we are part of something bigger," he said.

"For the people in the community that we meet and pass by it shows that the church is not just a bunch of buildings but a group of people who care and believe there is hope."

Stephen added: "Mostly we believe that prayer is powerful and it is worth giving time to in the hope that we see God move more and more in these communities."

A group of 16 people, including Diocesan Development Officer Trevor Douglas and Stephen's Church Army Colleague, Lead Pioneer Evangelist Karen Webb, gathered for the November prayer walk at St Columba's.

After a welcome from Stephen and worship led by Isaac on the guitar, people stepped out on to the dark streets in pairs. Those who preferred not to walk remained behind with Karen and prayed their blessing on the area with the help of a north Belfast map.

They headed in different directions into

the night, some into the Highfield Estate, others into the Springmartin area, and others onto the Ballygomartin Road.

Stephen was walking with Phyllis from Shankill Methodist Church. "There are so few people in these areas going to church," Phyllis said. "Many just go for events like weddings and funerals, there is a lot of apathy about God. If we pray you don't know what will happen somewhere else."

Passing Springhill Primary School, Phyllis and Stephen prayed for the head teacher, the staff and the safety of the children.

Marian and Teresa attend different churches but both belong to the Lamb of God Community. Prayer walking is nothing new to them, they have been doing it in troubled parts of Belfast for many years. They have some amusing memories, but say they have never encountered any difficulties in the areas for which they pray.

Walking across an open piece of land in the midst of the houses, the ladies pause. "Let us pray to God to put blessing into the very ground here where children play," one says, before continuing along a darkened street, a dog barking behind a gate.

Rose from Glengormley and Jessie from east Belfast are walking together. "I just felt I wanted to support Stephen in what he is doing," Rose said.

Indicating the lights of Belfast city, laid out below, Jessie said: "These people are living in a dark and bleak situation. I feel they are



Rose and Jessie on the prayer walk in north Belfast.



Marian and Theresa.

called to be the seers, but they have not yet woken up to who they are in God."

Rose quoted from Joshua. "Everywhere you put your foot, you claim the land. Where you put your feet you bring a blessing, claiming the land and homes for God. I believe it does happen. We may not see it, we do it in faith," she said.

Praying together in soft voices, oblivious of twitching curtains and barking dogs, the two ladies remembered people living with addictions and prayed that 'anyone involved in paramilitary activity would change their ways.'

St Mary's presentation to NI Hospice



St Mary's, Crumlin Road, Belfast, raised £2,550 for the Northern Ireland Hospice, largely due to the generosity of the late Miss Molly Crothers. In her will, Molly had requested that her furniture and some personal effects be sold and the proceeds given to the parish and then donated to the NI Hospice. That sale raised £2,050, and the parish added to this the sum of £500 raised by parishioners at Harvest. At the cheque presentation are, from left: Lilian Fletcher, cousin of the late Molly Crothers, Jenay Doyle, from the Northern Ireland Hospice, and the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy.



Worship before the prayer walk begins

The walkers gathered back at St Columba's for a warming cuppa. Liam McCluskey from the Lamb of God Community was one of those who established the prayer walk with Stephen.

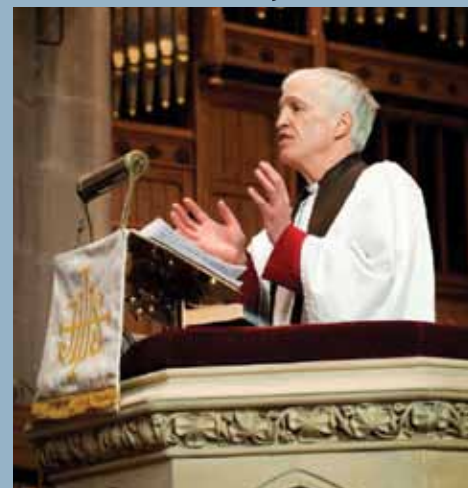
He welcomed the establishment of the North Belfast Centre of Mission. "It is great for the area. We are called to be witnesses and there is no point in only being a witness in your own church. We were praying for Stephen and Karen as we walked around, asking God to give them the wisdom, faith and boldness to sustain them," Liam said.

As the group reflected on the night's prayer walk, Stephen recounted how one young man had accepted his offer of prayer. "He said he would be going to prison in January," Stephen said.

For information on the monthly prayer walks contact Stephen on 07704481489 or email: s.whitten@churcharmy.org.uk

- More than 30 people took part in January's prayer walk in north Belfast.

Retirement of Canon Lloyd



Canon Stuart Lloyd preaches his last sermon as rector of St Patrick's, Ballymena.

St Patrick's, Ballymena, was packed on Sunday November 1 for the Rev Canon Stuart Lloyd's final service as rector before his retirement.

Stuart arrived in Ballymena in January 1989 for his institution in the Parish of Kilconriola and Ballyclug, conducted by the then Bishop, the Rt Rev Samuel Poyntz.

His wife Jane and three daughters, Lucy, Sophie and Sarah settled into parish life very quickly. Stuart soon became known 'as the wee man on the bike' for it was by bike he would ride around the town visiting his parishioners.

He enjoyed walks up Slemish and before going on one of his trips to Nepal he climbed Slemish 50 times raising money for his charity work in Nepal.

There was a huge turnout for Stuart's last service of Morning Prayer with the choir and the music group leading the singing. Afterwards, there was a light lunch and the presentation of gifts in the parish hall.

Second window is unveiled in St Mark's

On November 22, as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations of St Mark's Church, the Parish of Ballymacash dedicated a large stained glass window, completing the centrepiece of a design by Ulster artist, David Esler of Leadlines.

The dedication of the window, donated by Mrs Olive Eccleston, also reveals a family link with the opening of the church 40 years ago, when one of the highlights was the dedication of a stained glass window, largely designed by Mrs Eccleston's daughter Patricia, and installed directly above the main entrance to the church.



Making sure Christ is 'in the frame' at the Christmas EVENT organised by Engage Connor Youth.

More than 130 enjoy activities at 'Reveal'

More than 130 leaders and young people from seven parishes gathered in Ballycraig Primary School on October 3 for 'Reveal,' hosted by St Jude's, Muckamore.

The day, supported by the diocese and by the Engage Connor Youth Council, featured 'Believers on Mountain Bikes,' a milkshake bar, craft room, inflatables, prayer room, petting zoo, team games, worship and football. Special thanks are extended to the young people from Elevate.

Streetreach 2016!

Engage Connor Youth will run a second Streetreach within the diocese, building on last year's initiative in north Belfast.

With young people saying they 'loved every moment of it,' the Youth Council is looking forward to more young people getting involved in 2016.

Application forms are now available on the Connor diocesan website. Deadline for submission of forms is March 31.

Another great festive EVENT for young people

All Saints; Parish Hall, Antrim, was the venue for the Christmas EVENT on December 12.

Engage Connor Youth organised a variety of activities including chocolate fountains and a photo booth to kick off the evening, followed by worship by Michael and the band from St Patrick's, Coleraine.

The Rev Simon Genoe, Vicar of Lisburn Cathedral, spoke about Jesus being born into the world as the Prince of Peace and how He can bring peace to us, our loved ones and the world.

The young people travelled to the EVENT from Lisburn Cathedral, Larne, St Paul's Lisburn, Derryvolgie, Coleraine, Lambeg, Ballymena, Muckamore, Church of the Resurrection & Magheragall.

Your invite to join in new Youth Forum!

A new Connor Youth Forum was launched by Connor Youth Council at its Christmas celebration event in Antrim.

The Connor Youth Forum will give young people an opportunity to help shape youth ministry across the local church and the diocese.

The Forum is for young people who are aged 15+ and there can be one or two representatives from each parish.

The youth forum will offer young people:

- A voice in the direction of youth ministry across the Diocese.
- Opportunities to develop their skills and ability in leadership.
- Opportunity to develop their own faith.
- A place to develop relationships with other young people across the diocese.

Young people already signed up for the council include: Sarah Mills & Beth Taylor from Lambeg; Robbie Watt & Ryan Woods from Muckamore ; Sara McGucken & Katie Williamson from Lisburn Cathedral; Adam Steen & Ava Martin from St Patrick's, Coleraine; Ciaran Hampton & Catherine Forde from the Church of the Resurrection

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "We would love to see more young people from across the diocese engaged with this exciting project! We believe that

it will be a great opportunity to connect young people to the local church and help them understand the Church of Ireland at a deeper level."

Christina said there would be a number of gatherings of the young people involved throughout the year discussing youth ministry in Connor parishes.

To find out more or to get involved, contact Christina on 07753 312405 or christina@connor.anglican.org.

Exciting events still to come in 2016

March 12: Prayer Event, Ballymena

May 7: Sports Event, Ballymoney

July 1-5: Summer Madness, Glenarm

July 5-8: Streetreach, Belfast

September 2-4: Connor Takes the Castle, Castlewellan

October 1: Reveal, Muckamore

November 12: Leaders' Retreat Day (location tbc)

December 10: The Christmas EVENT, Antrim

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "With 38 pizzas consumed and lots of dancing, an enjoyable night was had by all!

"Thanks to all the Youth Council members for their contributions and to all the groups who came along to make this such a great evening."



Festive fun at the Christmas EVENT in Antrim Parish Halls on December 12.



Church Army Evangelist Stephen Whitten, the Rev David Ferguson and the Rev John McClure try their hands at a creative edible craft during the first of three archdeaconry meetings sharing resource ideas.

Liturgical resources - and Messy fun!

Clergy in Connor Diocese who attended Liturgical Resources archdeaconry meetings in October picked up some valuable resource ideas – and enjoyed a bit of Messy Church fun!

Meetings took place in each of Connor's three archdeaconries, with Dalriada getting together on October 6 in Holy Trinity Parish Centre, Ballycastle; Belfast meeting on October 15 in St Patrick's, Jordanstown; and Connor getting together on October 20 in All Saints' Parish Centre, Antrim.

At the meetings, Canon Peter McDowell, Diocesan Liturgical Officer, gave a presentation of liturgical resources to help enrich worship from the season of All Saints to Advent, Christmas and Epiphany.

Jill Hamilton, Connor Children's Project

Officer, outlined some Messy Church themes and gave a demonstration of imaginative games, crafts and activities. These activities proved to be great fun, with clergy getting stuck into making donkey faces and some artistic edible models of Mary along the way!

In connection with this series of roadshows, parishes are also being encouraged to share resources, and a wide range of resource ideas can be found on the diocesan website under Support/ Resources for Clergy.

New BB company for St Patrick's, Armoy

Following a successful Children's Summer Scheme in Armoy Primary School, St Patrick's Parish Church has been able to form a new Boys Brigade Company, to be known as 1st Armoy.

Following initial training by BBNI, five new Officers were enrolled along with 18 Anchor Boys (4 – 8 years) in a well-attended service on November 1.

The rector, the Rev Chris Easton, said: "It has been an encouraging time for the parish and it is hoped that the company will continue to grow and attract young boys into its ranks as a means of furthering God's Kingdom."

The parish hopes to recruit additional Officers and form a Junior Section (8-11 years) in autumn 2016.



The Rev Harold Sharp, Bishop's Curate, Margaret Irwin, Tom Irwin and Meta McIlhinney, Secretary, Select Vestry.

Kilwaughter and Cairncastle thank you

Parishioners of Kilwaughter and Cairncastle with All Saints bade farewell to highly respected Lay Reader Tom Irwin at a special social evening.

After four years of service assisting the rector of Kilwaughter and Cairncastle, Tom returned to assist in his home parish at the Church of The Holy Spirit, Mossley.

Jim Hamilton, Parish Treasurer, said: "It is God's will that Tom leaves the parish to return to his roots and while all are saddened at this parting the parishioners know he has yet much to do in his ministry and he will remain forever in their hearts and prayers."

At the social evening to mark Tom's departure, the Secretary of the Select Vestry, Meta McIlhinney, presented Tom with a gift and thanked him for his generous contribution to life in the parish.

Shankill Road Christmas Drop-in

Christmas is a great opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus with the communities around us, write **Church Army Evangelists Sister Karen Webb and Stephen Whitten** (North Belfast Centre of Mission).

In early December, we took the opportunity to hand out Candy Canes to shoppers leaving Tesco on the Ballygomartin Road. We had great conversations as we shared the story of that first Christmas with the people in north Belfast. One lady we met had never heard the story of the Candy Cane, and was excited to give them to her class of children as she was a primary school teacher.

Later in December we got the good news that we could have the use of a shop unit on the Shankill Road for a week in the run-up to Christmas, and so we opened a Drop-in. We had tea/coffee, shortbread and sweets.

It was great to have the opportunity to be a presence in the community and highlight Jesus as the reason for the season. Some folks were able to join us from local parishes, as we took our sweets and Christmas stories into the shops and pubs of the Shankill area. This gave us a small insight into the lives of people in the area and we look forward to many opportunities in the future for more outreach.

Bishop hosts visit for members of World Council of Churches



Bishop Alan Abernethy chats to WCC visitors Marianne Edjersten, Dr Clare Amos and the Rev Garland Pierce.

A number of representatives of the World Council of Churches (WCC) visited Belfast in November as guests of the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy.

Bishop Alan, who is a member of the WCC, hosted a lunch and a meeting for the WCC visitors and leaders from other churches in Northern Ireland.

The WCC guests who travelled from

Geneva, Berlin and the USA were Dr Clare Amos, Programme Executive for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation with the WCC, Ms Marianne Edjersten, WCC Director of Communications and the

Rev Garland Pierce, American Methodist and Senior Assistant to the WCC General Secretary.

Dr Amos was the guest preacher in St Anne's Cathedral on November 29. In her sermon she reflected on her experiences of living in Beirut where her husband Alan was the chaplain to the Anglican community in both Lebanon and Syria during the Lebanese civil war.

Later on Sunday, Dr Amos took part in a Christian Aid / Trocaire service in St Anne's which preceded a rally for climate justice in Writer's Square.

On the Monday morning, Dr Amos, accompanied by Ms Edjersten and the Rev Pierce, were given a tour of St Anne's before moving to Church of Ireland House for lunch with Bishop Alan, the Bishop of Clogher the Rt Rev John McDowell, and representatives of the Irish Council of Churches and other churches. After lunch, the group held a meeting in the Library at St Anne's Cathedral.

Lisburn Cathedral team to visit Yei

A mission team from Lisburn Cathedral is planning to visit Yei Diocese in South Sudan this summer.

Connor Diocese has had a partnership with Yei for several years, and teams from the Cathedral have visited before.

At the Harvest Service on October 18, Jenny Smyth, Mission Director of the Church Mission Society Ireland, spoke on the challenges facing Christians in South Sudan and the important role the church plays in brokering peace and building community in health care, schools and theological training.



Pictured at the Harvest Thanksgiving Service in Lisburn Cathedral on October 18 are, from left: The Rev Canon Sam Wright (rector), the Rev Simon Genoe (vicar), guest preacher Jenny Smyth (CMSI), Stephen McLoughlin (musical director) and Andrew Skelly (organist). Photo: John Kelly

Why Trafalgar Day has special significance in Derrykeighan

Trafalgar Day – October 21 – had a special significance in the Parish of Derrykeighan, whose parish hall is the only one in Ireland with a memorial to Lord Nelson – and to local battle hero Captain Charles Adair.

The British victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 is immortalised in history, but little is said about those who died alongside Nelson.

Captain Charles Adair led the contingent of Royal Marines on HMS Victory. He has been described as acting with great gallantry encouraging his men to fight off those trying to board from the French ship Redoubtable.

Adair's sacrifice is remembered in Dervock, where the Allen and Adair Memorial Hall bears his name. Built in 1936, it features a stained glass window depicting Nelson and Adair on

the HMS Victory shortly before their deaths.

Adair was not directly linked to Dervock, but his family would later be joined by marriage to the Allen family who made their fortune in the linen industry and bought a large estate near the County Antrim village.

The Allens were proud of their ancestor who fought and died at Trafalgar and so one of the last of the Allen line gifted a hall to the local parish church on the proviso that its interior would tell the story of the Allen and Adair families.

On October 21, Derrykeighan Parish hosted a Trafalgar Day Concert in the Allen and Adair Hall, which included music and verse featuring instruments that would have been familiar in 1805. The concert raised funds for the Allen and Adair Memorial Hall.

Inspirational Leah graduates

Inspirational Leah Batchelor, a parishioner of St Michael's, Belfast, who is determinedly recovering from 'locked-in syndrome,' passed another

milestone when she graduated just before Christmas.

Leah was just 21 when she had a major brain stem stroke caused by an



Leah on her graduation day with her mum Allison, dad Thomas, brother Ryan and Ryan's girlfriend Danielle.

aneurysm in September 2011. While Leah was aware of everything that was going on around her, the only muscles she could move were her eyelids.

And it was with her eyelids that – with the help of a spelling board – she first spelt out her ambition to finish her BDes degree in graphic design, an ambition which was realised at the University of Ulster graduation ceremony in Jordanstown on December 16.

Former Archdeacon of Belfast, the Ven Barry Dodds, was Leah's rector in St Michael's when she suffered the aneurysm and remains a close family friend. He said Leah was determined to see everything through.

"Graduating from university was in her mind when she was going through the first weeks after the stroke," said Barry. "She had proved her determination to see it through to the end. She has also got back to driving and has a specially adapted car, which has given her a great sense of independence.

"Yet although she has got a Degree and she is back to driving herself, simple things like turning over in bed are next to impossible for her. She cannot do a lot of the things we all take for granted. She is brilliant and has achieved so much, but there are many things which she is still denied."

The graduation ceremony was a proud day not only for Leah and her family, but for her many friends in St Michael's and in St Mary's, Ballybeen, where she is a Girls' Brigade leader.

Leah had expressed a determination to walk to receive the certificate herself. Her mum Allison said: "Leah had a seat on the stage, and was able to walk the couple of steps to receive her certificate.

"It was an extremely emotional day. I was so proud of her. As her mum I was thinking this was not how she wanted to graduate, but at the same time I was absolutely bursting that she had managed it, and managed it so successfully, getting a 2:1."

Leah is now doing freelance work and hopes to get an internship with a graphic design company.

"The ceremony was very good, I enjoyed and I am glad I was able to do it – but I was hopeful after all the rehab," Leah said.

A wet sleepout for Lambeg youngsters

On December 11, six young people from Lambeg Parish and their youth leader Aimee Gibson took part in the Challenge 48 Sleepout with Abaana – a charity which supports street children in Uganda.

The challenge aimed to give them an idea of what life is like for those living on the streets in Uganda and to raise money and awareness of the charity and its work.

The sleepout took place in Bangor, and the group from Lambeg arrived around 7pm to set up their home for the night – a cardboard box with a black tarpaulin covering it.

There were around 36 participants. The only money they had were some 20p pieces for the public toilets and so the young people were reliant on the generosity of passers-by giving them food and hot drinks. Everyone huddled around the fire pit as this was the only source of heat.

Aimee said: "Members of the public were very generous as they donated tea and coffee, chips and pizza. Thankfully it wasn't as cold as had been forecast, but being outside for a long period of time, everyone began to feel very cold.

"Around 2am everyone started to filter off into their boxes – they weren't the most comfortable but it was better than being outside. 5am came and so did the rain, it got so heavy that the boxes started to give way to the weight of the rain."

Everyone was up by around 8am and the fire pit was very quickly re-lit and local business provided gazebos for shelter, tea and coffee and bacon butties.

Before leaving for home, the young people from Lambeg took part in a street collection.

Aimee said the young people thoroughly enjoyed the sleepover but found it very challenging. One commented: "We only had to stick it out for one night, while there are loads of young people doing this on a daily basis – that really hit home."

Another young person said: "It was a really horrific experience, especially when it rained and many of the cardboard boxes were flooded and falling in on us."



The Bishop of Connor the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, right, with conference speakers Bishop John Pritchard and Dr Jane Williams.



Chatting at the conference are the Rev Robert Simpson, Ballywillan, left, and the Rev Andrew Sweeney, Ballymoney.



Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie catches up with the Rev Elizabeth Hanna, St Nicholas, Belfast, at the clergy conference.

'Upliftin



The former Dean of Connor, the Very Rev John Bond, was thanked at the conference held in November as the 'most wonderful, amazing conference I have been to'.

Dean Bond, who retired in January, was thanking the Rt Rev John Pritchard, former Bishop of Oxford and one of two guest speakers at the conference.

The other guest speaker was Dr Jane Williams, Assistant Dean and Tutor in Theology at St Mellitus College and wife of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams.

This was the third clergy conference to take place in the Slieve Russell Hotel in Co Cavan – previous conferences were held in 2009 and 2012 – and it ran from November 11-13.

It was attended by 94 delegates including clergy and Connor staff.

The Dean of Connor led the Opening Eucharist, assisted by the Rev Peter Munce. Worship each day was accompanied by a music group led by the Rev Julie Bell, curate at Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, with the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, curate at St Patrick's, Jordanstown, and Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, as well as a number of talented singers from among the delegates.

Over the three days, Dr Williams led a series of Bible Studies, her thoughts and her gentle voice captivating her audience.

Bishop John, also gently spoken, led sessions

g and challenging'



John Bond, described the Connor clergy as 'uplifting, most challenging and most privileged to attend'.

On 'the joy and struggle of vocation and discipleship,' his words providing both challenge and refreshment.

Over the three days the clergy enjoyed the comforts of this lovely hotel with its excellent food. Some availed of the spa facilities, others braved the wind to walk in the hotel grounds. There was time built into the schedule for relaxation, an opportunity for clergy to enjoy fellowship together away from their parishes.

On the second night, members of the Diocesan Development Team gave an update on their work. They were introduced by Diocesan Development Officer Trevor Douglas and the conference heard from Youth Officer Christina Baillie, Church Army Evangelists Karen Webb and Stephen Whitten who spoke about the North Belfast Centre of Mission, Communications Officer Karen Bushby, and Children's Project Development Officer Jill Hamilton.

An unexpected guest appeared in the form of 'Grandad' who, with a little help from Karen Webb, gave a musical rendition of 'New York, New York' in a hands-on demonstration of the value of puppet ministry.

The second evening finished with an atmospheric Taizé service, candles burning in

the centre of the floor and repeated chants bringing a very positive day to a close.

At the end of the conference, Bishop Alan thanked everyone who had made it possible, including the diocesan team, musicians, speakers and in particular his secretary Rosemary Patterson.

Thanking Bishop John, Dean Bond said the two speakers had made this particular conference the 'most amazing' he had

ever attended." John has spoken from the heart to the hearts of all of us," Dean Bond said. "I have learned so much and have been helped and blessed in so many ways. Even after 48 years of ministry I have been refreshed and renewed."

Dean Mann thanked Dr Williams for all she had given the conference. "You have asked us to think about a lot. You have said things which will live with us," he told her.



Bishop Alan, Bishop John and clergy singing at one of services held during the conference.

Climate change is 'a devastating reality'

An ecumenical service of prayer and reflection for climate justice was held in St Anne's Cathedral on November 29 before a rally on climate change in Writer's Square on the eve of UN climate change talks in Paris.

The service was organised by Christian Aid and Trócaire in partnership with St Anne's. The speaker was the Rev Canon Mike Parker.

Canon Parker posed the question: 'What do we do knowing what we know?'

"We give a voice to those whose lives have been shattered by climate change," Canon Parker said. "Maybe we think we don't see it yet in our society but climate change is a constant reality. A devastating reality for the poorest of our world."

He said climate change would one day come to everyone.

"We worship today inside this historic St Anne's Cathedral. But this whole area used to be the docks. We are close to the sea in this city. We are close to the sea and the sea level is rising. Contingency planning for flooding in this city must be our new reality," he said.

Representatives of several churches took part in the service including the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann; Church of Ireland Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev Harold Miller; Father Colin Grant from the Roman Catholic Church; the Rev Richard Kerr, Presbyterian Church, the Rev Brian Anderson of the Methodist Church, Ms Beate Hahn of the Lutheran Church and Dr Clare Amos, World Council of Churches.



Two young Christian Aid supporters get their message across at the climate change service in St Anne's Cathedral.



The scene inside St Colman's after the fire had been extinguished.

Rector is injured in Dunmurry blaze

St Colman's Parish Church, Dunmurry, was extensively damaged in a fire in the early hours of January 11.

The rector, the Rev Adrian McLaughlin, was first on the scene. He attempted to tackle the blaze but the fire quickly took hold and Adrian had to flee the building. He was later treated in hospital for the effects of smoke inhalation.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service said the fire was accidental. Seven fire appliances attended the scene and assistance was also provided by the Fire Emergency Support Service appliance. One firefighter was taken to hospital with non-serious injuries when he was hit by falling masonry.

Adrian said the fire had caused 'significant damage.' "I got up to let our cat in and spotted what I thought was a light in the church. I pulled my boots on and went over. The place was full of smoke, so I searched for the source, and got the hose while my wife Christine called the Fire Brigade," he said.

"But it was like putting petrol on a bonfire. The place literally exploded in my face. The building dates to 1908 and everything in it was so dry. I had to run for my life. The roof just went up and the zinc pipes in the organ melted like chocolate in front of me.

The Fire Service was on the scene within 10 minutes. "They were superb," Adrian said. The Fire Service finished up at the church at 5.20am.

Adrian said: "The stonework and the arches were burned, the organs have gone and we were gifted a chandelier before Christmas and it has been destroyed. The



'Frightening.' The Rev Adrian McLaughlin captured this image as the fire took hold inside St Colman's.

furniture in the choir stalls was destroyed, and the keyboards, the lectern, in fact everything is sodden and stained with tar and water."

Adrian said that other local churches had been quick to offer their support and this was appreciated by the parish.

"I am very upset for the people of Dunmurry Parish, but we will get through this and it will pull us together as a congregation," said Adrian.

He added: "It was a very, very frightening experience, and I hope and pray that through it other people will learn that if there is a fire, you have to get out."

The parishioners are meeting in the Parish Hall until the damage has been repaired, which may take up to year.

Harvest Festival in Irish at St George's

St George's Parish Church, Belfast, held its Harvest Thanksgiving Service, *Altú an Fhómhair*, in Irish on Sunday October 11.

The service was conducted by the Rev David MacDonnell, rector of Dunfanaghy in the Diocese of Raphoe, and the Lessons were read by Gordon McCoy and Micheál Ó Mainnín.

The Prayers were led by Caroline Nolan Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise (the Irish Guild of the Church) and Dáithí Ó Maolchoille. The singing was led by Wallace High School Honours Choir.

St George's also hosted a Carol Service in Irish on December 6.

Archbishop Welby delivers lecture

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev and Rt Hon Justin Welby, delivered the 2016 Church of Ireland Theological Lecture at Queen's University on February 8.

Demand for tickets was so great the event was moved from the Great Hall at Queen's to the Elmwood Hall.

The Archbishop's theme for this lecture was Reconciliation, and there was an opportunity for questions following his address.



Lanterns outside St Patrick's, Broughshane.

Lanterns conclude 250th anniversary

St Patrick's Church, Broughshane, concluded its 250th Anniversary Year with an Advent Service - 'Christ the Light in the Community.' Afterwards, a lantern was carried out of the church with the congregation following carrying prayer lanterns which were then displayed in the shape of a cross in the church car park.

The congregation was invited to place a prayer in each lantern and the proceeds were given to Macmillan Cancer and the Lighthouse, Ballymena. Families then took their lantern home for Christmas.



The Rev Elaine O'Brien, third from right, with volunteers who run the charity shop in St Ninian's Parish Hall and some regular customers.

A thriving charity shop at St Ninian's

St Ninian's Parish Church may have closed for worship in 2014, but there is still a thriving ministry in the parish hall in the form of a charity shop.

The shop opened for business in the hall off the Whitewell Road in September 2014, and is run by a dedicated team of volunteers. It stocks a huge range of items, and is open every Thursday and Friday from 12.30pm-4pm.

Warren Kerr, People's Warden in the parish of St John and St Ninian, volunteers most days. The 75-year-old says he enjoys the time he spends in the shop. "We put the world to rights," he said. "Most of the people who come to help out here are vestry members and choir members."

The rector, the Rev Elaine O'Brien said: "The shop provides the opportunity for a good social gathering for volunteers and local people, and is also a great boost to our income."

Even before the closure of St Ninian's - services are now held in St John's - Elaine said the hall was rarely used. The charity shop has changed all that.

It was the idea of Sam Millar, whose runs his own antiques business. "I felt there could be something done to use the hall when it was empty and to make some money for the parish," he said. "Because I have an antiques shop in Greyabbey, this was something I felt I knew a bit about."

Belle Besant is a regular volunteer. "I enjoy the craic and I think the people who come in do too," she said. "We are lucky that we have nice people around us."

Customers come from all backgrounds.

Mrs Cummings is a regular. "I find the shop very useful, I have picked up quite a few things," she said, leaving with her arms full of colourful items.

Another regular customer is Betty Turner. "You are guaranteed a friendly welcome. More often than not I come in for a yarn, but I do a lot of shopping too because the staff are very good and always point me in the right direction," she said. "I have bought curtains, bedding, dishes and ornaments and also bits and pieces for Greencastle Chapel, so it is very inter-church!"

Sam said that for many of the volunteers this was a new experience. "Advertising in the parish magazine and by word of mouth, items to sell started to fill the hall and we were up and running, thanks to our dedicated team," he said.

"While the objective of raising much needed funds continues, two other important benefits have emerged. A strong fellowship has developed between those involved in the project but perhaps most important of all we have built relationships with the wider often troubled community of the Whitewell Road.

"We have learnt a lot in the past year, not least about what sells and what doesn't!"

Any parish considering a similar project is welcome to contact Belle on 028 9077 0527 or Sam on 07867 622514 and they will be happy share their experiences.



Black Santa, Dean John Mann, gets a bit of help from the Rev Julie Bell, curate at Christ Church, Lisburn, and a minor canon of St Anne's.

Black Santa raises more than £195,000

The 39th annual Black Santa Sit-out on the steps of St Anne's raised a fantastic £195,000 which was shared by more than 200 charities.

This year Black Santa employed new technology on the Cathedral steps – a credit/debit card facility which sat alongside the Dean's traditional barrel.

And there were many generous donations, from just a few pence to some truly fantastic sums, including £1,200 from a taxi driver, a £1,000 cheque from a passing motorist and £1,000 from the NI branch of the British Deer Society

Buses, work vans, taxis, bin lorries and numerous cars stopped in Donegall Street to add to the fund, and as always the public was magnanimous in its support of Black Santa.

At the annual Good Samaritans' service in the Cathedral on February 7, comedians May McFettridge, Gene Fitzpatrick, Jimmy Cricket and William Caulfield generously donated their time to distribute the charity cheques.



Archbishop Welby in the Cathedral Library before the Corrymeela Service.

CLCGB flourishing in Connor Diocese

The Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade (CLCGB) is flourishing, bringing many children and families into church for the first time.

Northern Ireland Development Workers Victoria Jackson and Matthew Nicholl say Connor Diocese has been one of their key areas of focus.

They have been working with Connor parishes including Middle Church, Ballinderry; St Patrick's, Ballymena; St Matthew's, Broomhedge; Church of the Holy Evangelists, Carnmoney; St Hilda's, Kilmakee; St Paul's, Lisburn and Maghergall Parish, as well as recently opened companies in Lambeg Parish and St Colman's, Dunmurry.

The CLCGB is a Church of Ireland uniformed youth organisation for boys and girls aged four to 21. "Our motto is to extend Christ's Kingdom through fun, faith and fellowship so that children who come along to the CLCGB will make friends, have fun, learn new things and most importantly grow in their faith," Victoria explained. "We encourage a strong link between our groups and their parish and find that having a CLCGB group is often an excellent means of bringing new families into the church.

"The children and young people can enjoy age specific programmes. On a Brigade night they will be involved in Bible teaching, badge work, sports, crafts, games and music. Throughout the year our members are kept busy with regional and national sports competitions, fun days, games nights, services and parades."

Victoria said a grant from Youth United



Children and leaders at Lambeg CLCGB.

means the CLCGB can now offer support and financial help to parishes who wish to open a CLCGB group.

"This support allows us to cover the cost of membership fees and uniforms as well as providing help with sports and craft equipment. We are also on hand to help you get your group off the ground, finding you leaders and members and promoting your group in the local community," she said. "Starting something new can sometimes appear daunting which is why we are here to get alongside you to train and support your leaders as well as taking the first few weeks of your programme."

The Archbishop of Armagh, The Most Rev Dr Richard Clark, is Chaplain of the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade. "I can highly recommend the work of this organisation in giving children a place to belong and to grow in their faith," he said.

For further information contact Victoria on 07958202724 or email victoriaspeers@clcgb.org.uk or Matthew on 07538 888005 or email: matthewnicholl1@clcgb.org.uk.

Archbishop of Canterbury attends 50th anniversary for Corrymeela Community

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, celebrated 50 years of the Corrymeela Community at a service in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on November 1.

The Head of the Worldwide Anglican Communion joined other church leaders for this service of thanksgiving. It was led by Corrymeela Community Leader Pádraig Ó Tuama and featured an extended liturgy written by John Bell from the Iona Community as well

as music from Voices Together and the St Anne's Cathedral Choir.

Opening the service, Mr Ó Tuama said: "Corrymeela believes in the power of people telling their stories, of shared hospitality, of telling the truth about the present, of turning towards each other and finding strength, life and hope in each other. Ultimately, the work of Corrymeela helps groups learn how to be well together."



All set for Kids' Big Adventure in Ballymoney.

Learning all about God's Big Garden

More than 160 children from parishes across Connor Diocese took part in two Kids' Big Adventure Days held in Cloughfern and Ballymoney.

The theme for 2015 was God's Big Garden, telling the story of the creation, fall and God's rescue plan in sending Jesus to take the punishment and bring people back to God.

These events were organised by Connor Children's Project Officer Jill Hamilton and took place on October 10 and 17.

Jill explained: "Our crafts, storytelling, drama, games, and songs were all linked to the theme of God's wonderful creation and His love for us despite our mistakes."

At Cloughfern, the children made pipe cleaner spiders complete with googly eyes and beads before a stage presentation featuring warm up songs led by Karen and Amy Webb, and then those pesky children 'Phoebe and Theo' told everyone about a competition they had set themselves to make the best 'creation.'

Praise songs during the afternoon were led by Aimee Gibson and Amy Webb, and camels Engelbert and Humperdinck

appeared to tell everyone about an 'invisibility hat' which didn't quite work out as planned...

The first workshop included crafts such as party blower snakes, peg bugs, Adam and Eve biscuits and design a creature. The second workshop included three challenges before it was time for more songs, a group game and an interactive talk led by Andrew Neill.

The Ballymoney event followed the same successful programme as the first, with the on stage presentation including puppets and a short video – all telling the story of how God created the world and how humans chose to turn their own way and disobey God.

As well as the craft and challenge workshops, the kids enjoyed some creation-themed relay races. As the day drew to a close with the talk by Andrew, the children learned to sign along to a song called 'Walk with You,' and Jill expressed thanks to Aimee Gibson and Amy Webb



Scarey spiders in Cloughfern!

for teaching the children the signs based on British Sign language.

"St Patrick's, Ballymoney, is renowned for its hospitality and home-made cakes and buns so the leaders' café was a very popular spot and provided a chance for leaders to spend time together," Jill said.

"Thanks to all the leaders who gave up their Saturdays to bring their groups along, you really made the day special for everyone."

Life of Moses

A new nine week children's resource covering the life of Moses is now available at www.rippleconnor.org.uk. The series is set out in three-week blocks. It involves loads of participation from the children including quizzes, hands-on activities and reflective times to respond to God's word.

The Arctic - 'It forces you back to yourself'

Summertime, and most people pack beach towels and shorts into their suitcases, but for the Rev Mike McCann and his wife Sarah, last summer was all about woolly hats and snowboots.

The intrepid duo left their home in Carrickfergus, where Mike is rector of Kilroot and Templecorran Parish, and travelled to the Canadian Arctic for Mike's three month sabbatical.

They were based in Iqaluit, the main city of the territory of Nunavut, Baffin Island, with 6,000 inhabitants and facilities including supermarkets, cinema, hotels, gift-shops, museums and a library.

Here temperatures never crept higher than eight degrees, even though this was high summer in the Arctic with almost 24 hour daylight – in winter it can drop to -50C!

The city is ringed by three miles of tarred road but the rest are gravel or compacted clay. It covers a rectangle of two miles by four miles - beyond that there are no roads.

"It is quite claustrophobic. It is 75 miles to the next settlement of 450 people. There is no road to it, and it is 30 minutes by plane at a cost of £230 one-way or six hours by snowmobile in winter," Mike said. "You can't just head off to Portrush if you want a change of scene. There is no change of scene. It forces you back to yourself."

Mike was working at the Cathedral Church of St Jude. His stay was arranged by the Rt Rev Darren McCartney, Suffragan Bishop of the Arctic, who formerly served in the Diocese of Connor as curate in St Nicholas Church in Carrickfergus.

Despite its insularity, Iqaluit has a very international community. There are five other churches, but the Anglican Church is the main church serving the Inuit community.

Darren and his wife Karen live in Iqaluit where Karen works for the government of Nunavut, developing a crime prevention strategy, and looks after prayer and music in the Cathedral. Darren travels all over northern Canada, and is away from home two weeks in four. He is currently establishing a theological institute to train local pastors and readers in St Jude's.

During his sabbatical, Mike took the English language service in the Cathedral, giving the Dean a long overdue holiday. Mike and Sarah lived in an apartment with a view of the igloo-shaped Cathedral and the bay.

Mike also had the opportunity to preach in Apex Church, historic because it was on a boat in the nearby bay that the first Anglican service was preached in 1578. The service was led by a retired Bishop and Mike and Sarah were amused that the first hymn was sung to the tune of the Londonderry Air, with the lyrics in Inuktitut!

There is a soup kitchen and thrift shop beside St Jude's. The kitchen was a church initiative and is now a separate charity.

"Seventy to 100 lunches are prepared and served mostly to Inuit folks," said Mike. "At the weekend the people get a four course meal prepared by local chefs. It is remarkable. All kinds of people volunteer."

More than 50 per cent of the Inuit are unemployed and supported by government. Social problems among the Inuit community include drugs and alcohol addiction and lack of money for food, as well as food shortages. Many people live in overcrowded conditions, some in wooden structures along the shoreline.

Iqaluit - The Cathedral is the igloo shaped building.



Two Inuit ladies Mike and Sarah met in Apex.

The soup kitchen is a vital project, and took up much of Mike and Sarah's time. "I think I imagined having less to do when we were there, so I brought crafts but I actually spent very little time crocheting and never did any embroidery," Sarah said. "We spent more time with other people than I expected. But there was more time to read and pray than at home."

Because of the time of year, Mike and Sarah watched the snow and ice melt, and experienced long periods of rain. In early July conditions meant food supplies in the shops were running low.

In his blog from the Arctic, Mike wrote: "The bay is still frozen over and no boats are able to sail. Although there is now a small band of open water across the bay and the ice is getting darker (a sign that it is becoming water-logged), the ice-breaker ships are still unable to get in. Usually the bay melts in mid-June.

"People here are waiting for the sea-lift to bring in supplies. Many people order enough dry goods to do them a year and then these supplies are shipped in during the summer. Apparently it is a lot cheaper to do this. For two adults and two under-

fives the supplies needed cost about \$8,000. This obviously makes it difficult for those struggling financially to benefit from the sea-lift as they need spare income in order to save for it."

The couple could see the supermarket was showing the strain with a reduction in the amount of fresh fruit and veg on sale.

They helped the local community celebrate Nunavut Day when they enjoyed a cooked beef burger, while the locals feasted on raw meat and fish!

Mike explained why the Inuit people had come to settle in these inhospitable regions. "The Canadian government moved people about by force to use the Inuit population as a way of securing Canada's high northern territories from other countries – presumably the Russians, USA and China – as the high north has many mineral and oil reserves," he said. "Also, over a 20 year period, thousands of dogs were slaughtered to prevent the Inuit people moving. It was like the government taking away our cars and access to food as the dogs helped with hunting."

But he observed that since the establishment of the territory of Nunavut, there does seem to be an element of healing taking place.

Mike and Sarah could not venture too far from the town because of the threat from polar bears. They never saw one, but two were shot in the town during their stay.

They did join Darren and Karen for a picnic lunch by the river in Apex. "We were the only non Inuit there," said Sarah. "It was a real privilege to be welcomed in to the gathering."



The Rev Mike McCann, left, and his wife Sarah with Bishop Darren McCartney at a picnic by the river in Apex.

As planned, Sarah returned home to the family after two months, leaving Mike alone in Iqaluit. Reflecting on that period in his blog, Mike wrote: "Part of my thinking was that I should have period of solitude and quiet and that is what I am having now. The enforced restrictions and lack of distractions require you to think more deeply and re-establish disciplines of prayer and quiet that get lost in the busyness of life. I now have an opportunity to have time just to listen and to recapture a deeper relationship with God."

He also had the chance to go out into the bay and sail among the icebergs with Darren who has plans to build a bigger boat which will enable him to sail around his parishes when the sea is free of ice.

Sarah and Mike said the sabbatical had been a really positive experience. "We had an amazing time and it was a privilege to get close to the Inuit," Sarah said.

Mike added: "The Inuit are lovely people. They were very respectful, we prayed together and they said thank you at the end. They really had a great attitude."

He said returning home had been something of a culture shock in reverse. "People here think they have things to worry about, but I look back and see people living in nine square miles, coming to soup kitchens for lunch and just trying to raise their kids. In the middle of winter they spend all the time in their houses. It is very claustrophobic. Imagine spending your whole life living like that.

"But I am optimistic for them. They are in a transition from being hunter gatherers to settlers and more of them are achieving that. They are a very resilient people."

Monkstown's 'bear hugs' for refugees



Young parishioners at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Monkstown, sent great bear hugs to refugee children fleeing to Europe by supporting Project Paddington.

In response to the Parish Harvest Appeal dozens of teddies were parcelled up and forwarded to children who had to leave everything behind when they fled home.

Project Paddington was set up by Joy French, a friend of the Rev Arlene Moore, Priest-in-Charge of the Church of the Good Shepherd. The idea was for children to give teddies with welcome messages attached to those who had fled the war in Syria.

Joy has now partnered with Tear Fund, and Monkstown parish became a Regional Coordinator for Northern Ireland groups.

Among the parishioners who laminated tags and worked tirelessly to get the teddies ready for their journey were Kathleen Lunn, Honorary Churchwarden, Liz Feely, Honorary Steward, Laura Harris and Len Officer.

Project Paddington has now closed for new teddy bear registrations, but there are other ways to support the charity. Visit the Project Paddington website <http://projectpaddington.com/>.

Ancient sermons

A book of sermons by James Saurin, who was vicar of Belfast in 1747, was launched in St Anne's Cathedral on October 20. Some 55 of the sermons were recently discovered in St Anne's.

'Preaching in Belfast, 1747–54 A selection of the sermons of James Saurin' is available from the Four Courts Press website <http://www.fourcourtspress.ie>.

Baking for Abaana

The Mettle Youth Group from Lisburn Cathedral held a Funday, Bunday Sunday on November 29 and raised £1,050.40 for the work of the charity Abaana.

Teen relationships focus of campaign

The EVERY campaign was launched by Love for Life in partnership with Engage Connor Youth and Ripple Children's Ministry in Antrim Parish on January 19.

The campaign is a response to a changing culture, with teenagers growing up in a sexual landscape which presents them with a confusing range of voices and opinions.

EVERY offers resources to help clergy and parish teams engage with the important conversations about relationships and sex.

Judith Cairns and Graham Hare introduced the campaign at the Connor launch and said that the Church has an important role to play. For further information about the campaign, visit www.loveforlife.org.uk.



At the EVERY launch in Antrim are, from left: Jill Hamilton, Connor Children's Officer; Karen Webb, North Belfast Centre of Mission; Judith Cairns, CEO, Love for Life; Trevor Douglas, Diocesan Development Officer; Christina Baillie, Connor Youth Officer and Graham Hare, General Manager, Love for Life.

Ballymoney hosts talk on parenting

Ballymoney Parish hosted two sessions with Rachel Turner, Family Life Pastor at St Paul's Church, Hammersmith, and author of a number of books on parenting.

On January 22 and 23, Rachel shared insights and information from her latest book 'Parenting Children for a life of Confidence.'

Her first session was aimed at parents; sharing how to help their child grow in confidence in their life and in their faith. The second for children's leaders looked at praying with children, how to help them encounter God through prayer and how to carry out prayer ministry with kids.

Jill Hamilton, Connor Children's Project Officer, said: "Whether you are a parent or work with children and young people, Rachel's message is equally challenging and relevant. She will inspire anyone who has a heart for seeing children and young people grow in their faith."



Members of the Select Vestry of St Patrick's, Broughshane, with Dean Bond on the occasion of his retirement.

Farewell service as Dean Bond retires

The Parish of St Patrick, Broughshane, held a Farewell Service of Thanksgiving on January 10 for the ministry of The Very Rev John FA Bond, Dean of Connor.

Dean Bond retired on January 31 after almost 17 years as rector. Ordained in 1967 for the curacy of St Paul, Lisburn, Dean Bond served as curate of Finaghy – St Polycarp's, from 1970-1977. He became rector of the Parish of Ballynure & Ballyeaston (Ballyclare) prior to his appointment to the Parish of Skerry, Rathcavan & Newtowncrommelin (Broughshane). He was appointed Dean of Connor in 2001.

Dean Bond has been a member of General Synod since 1978 and has served on many committees and held different positions in the Church of Ireland. During his ministry an extension was added to St John's, Ballyclare, and an extension to St Patrick's Parish Hall in Broughshane.

In his farewell address, the Dean said it had been a privilege to minister and serve in the various parishes over the years and to visit people in their homes. He said he was 'humbled by the dignity, resilience and sheer bravery' of so many in 'their own personal Calvary situation.'

Dean Bond told the congregation: "I have always believed that the best evangelism is warmth and friendship and showing a genuine interest in people.

"I have been privileged to be part of your lives as your rector and Joyce and our family thank you all for your kindness, support, prayers and Christian love."

Presentations were made to the Dean and his wife Joyce by representatives of both the parish and the community.

'A wonderful ending' to 48 years in ministry

The Very Rev John FA Bond, said it was an honour and a privilege to represent the Church of Ireland at the Inaugural Service of the 10th General Synod of the Church of England at Westminster Abbey on November 24.

Her Majesty the Queen opened the Synod. Dean Bond was on the platform for the proceedings and he and his wife Joyce attended an Ecumenical Lunch hosted by the Presidents of the Synod.

Dean Bond said afterwards: "It was an occasion to remember and my grateful thanks to the Standing Committee for the invitation to represent our Church. It was a

wonderful ending to over 48 years in Parish Ministry!"



Dean Bond (in red) on the platform during Her Majesty's opening address to the 10th Inaugural General Service of the Church of England. Photo: Andrew Dunsmore / Picture Partnership.

St Bartholomew's rector hon chaplain to Lord Mayor

The Rev Kevin Graham, rector of St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis, was appointed an honorary chaplain to the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Arder Carson, part of an interfaith chaplaincy team reflecting the multi-cultural nature of Belfast today.

On Armistice Day members of the chaplaincy team accompanied the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor for the service at 11am to mark the anniversary of the end of WW1 at Belfast City Hall.

Kevin said: "It's a great privilege to serve the Lord Mayor and all the people of Belfast as part of the multi faith chaplaincy team. It's encouraging that faith is not excluded from our civic life but is afforded an opportunity to affect that civic life."

Mountain marathon to aid refugees



Gail and Sarah stride out during the Mourne Mountain challenge.

Three Connor parishioners undertook the arduous Mourne Mountain Marathon to raise funds to help transport Syrian refugees to Poland.

Gail Henderson who belongs to the parish of Gleno with Larne, and Sarah Gamble, a parishioner of Broughshane, put their best feet forward in this marathon which takes place over two days and requires all competitors to take part in pairs. Sarah's husband Richard Gamble, Broughshane Parish, and his brother David, also paired up for the challenge.

They were raising funds for the Barnabas Trust's 'Operation Safe Haven,' which aims to safely transport Syrian refugees to Poland. For information please visit: <https://my.give.net/BarnabusfundOSHGSDRMMM>

New Canon installed

The Rev Michael Parker, rector of Carnalea, Diocese of Down and Dromore, was installed as a Canon of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on November 15.



Pictured at the laying up of the artwork in St Simon's are, from left: Cadet 1st Class Stephanie Emes, Officer Cadet Zac Lloyd Humphreys, Petty Officer (SCC) Brian Higgins, the Rev Raymond Moore, Lt Cdr (SCC) Leslie King, Cadet 1st Class Melissa Ramm. Photo Pete Bleakley.

Commemoration in St Simon's for lost HMS Hawke seamen

A stunning artwork commemorating the sinking of the HMS Hawke in World War One was laid up in St Simon's, Donegall Road, on November 29.

The artwork had decorated a gable wall at Barrington Gardens since it was unveiled on Remembrance Sunday.

Five sailors from the Donegall Road area went down with the Hawke. Of the 524 souls on board, 49 were from Northern Ireland. The wreck of HMS Hawke lies in the North Sea. It was struck by a torpedo and sank in eight minutes. Seventy five 16-year-old sailors were among the dead.

The commemorative artwork, supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive through the Greater Village Regeneration Trust (GVRT), was hand sewn by members of the local community, including parishioners of St Simon's and St Philip's.

It uses a net and rope framework and 524 satin poppies - one for each victim.

The project's designer Pete Bleakley, said: "The Donegall Road was one of WW1's biggest suppliers of fighting men and the loss of HMS Hawke hit the Donegall Road and Greater Belfast area hard. It is fitting that, just over a century later, they now have a memorial dedicated to their honour, service and sacrifice."

Jennifer Hawthorne, Housing Executive Head of Cohesion, said: "This project has

seen the local community take ownership of a gable wall which previously was a site of racist and sectarian graffiti.

"This unique artwork has achieved the aims of creating a poignant reminder of local people's sacrifice during WW1."

The Rev Raymond Moore, Priest-in-Charge of St Simon's, said the artwork will be 'laid up' in the church permanently, but will be taken to Barrington Gardens for an annual Service of Remembrance for the victims of the sinking.

At the service, the poppy net was handed into the care of St Simon's by Lt Cdr Leslie King, a Bangor based Sea Cadets officer.

The wall at Barrington Gardens is now decorated with a mural featuring a facsimile of a photograph of HMS Hawke, an information plaque about the crafting of the 'Poppy Net,' and the sinking of the Hawke.

Raymond said this new artwork meant a lot in the local community. "The plaque and the mural of HMS Hawke on the gable wall at Barrington Gardens will hopefully present a new outlook for both residents of the area and the thousands of people who use the Donegall Road on a daily basis," he said.

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Most Church of Ireland Churches will be showing this film - only 24 mins long - possibly around the
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