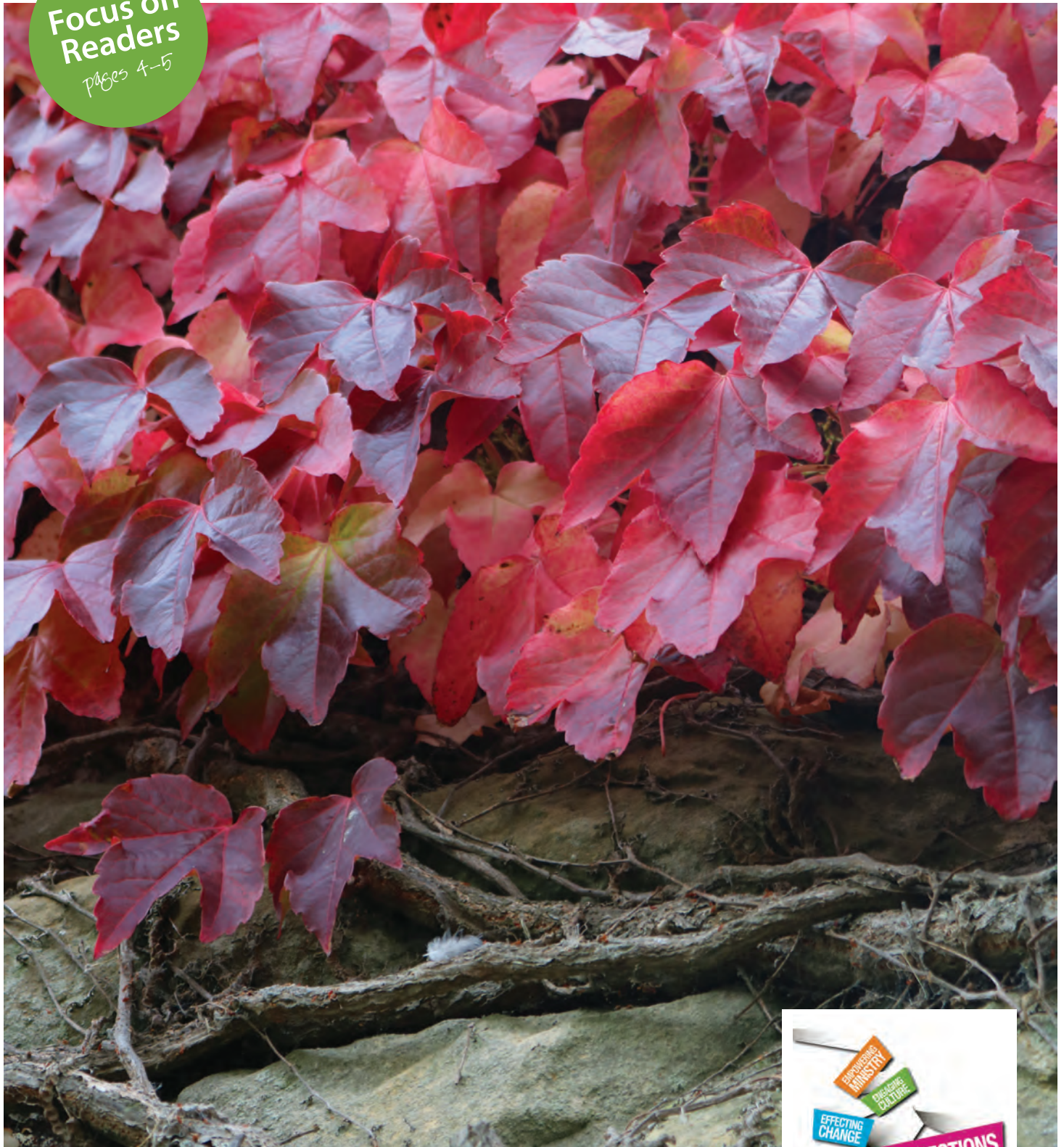


# CONNOR

## connections

Focus on  
Readers  
*pages 4-5*



The magazine for the Diocese of Connor **Autumn 2018**



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Autumn 2018

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## Cover photo:

The stunning Virginia Creeper which adorns the tower leading to the spire at Christ Church, Derriaghy. The spire is to undergo major renovation work to preserve it for future generations. See page 15.



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

Karen Bushby,  
Connor Diocesan  
Communications Officer,  
Church of Ireland House,  
61-67 Donegall Street,  
Belfast, BT1 2QH

Tel: 028 9082 8874  
Mob: 07766 103880  
Email: dco@connordiocese.org



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## A refreshing and creative time

I am very grateful to all who helped during my sabbatical, especially Team Connor and the archdeacons. There was certainly a warm welcome when I returned.

I had a very refreshing and creative time, writing, travelling, praying and having some special time with my family. I will be sharing some of my thoughts at the evening session of Diocesan Synod and at next year's Lenten Seminars.

One of the joys of being on sabbatical was having time to reflect on my own faith

journey and rediscovering the amazing grace made known to us in Jesus. In reading the gospels in depth again and penning my reflections on Jesus, my heart and spirit were refreshed and renewed.

May we all know the presence of the risen Jesus journeying with us as we seek to incarnate his grace and presence in our local communities.

Grace and peace,

+ *Alison Connor*

## Institution in Larne



At the service of institution in St Cedma's, Larne are, from left: The Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Ven George Davison, Bishop's Commissary; the Rev David Lockhart, who was instituted as rector; the Rev William Henry, Maze Presbyterian Church, who preached; and the Rev Philip Benson, former curate.

St Cedma's Parish Church was packed on August 30 for the institution of the Rev David Lockhart as rector of the Grouped Parishes of Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo.

David, who was rector of Cloughfern Parish for 15 years, was instituted by the Ven George Davison, Commissary to the Bishop of Connor. Preacher at the service was the Rev William Henry, Maze Presbyterian Church.

Welcoming the congregation, Archdeacon Davison said many people had come a distance to be present, and he made special reference to the Rev Mikael Leckström from Larne's link parish of Väderstad in the Swedish Diocese of Linköping, who had travelled especially to welcome the new rector.

David is married to Beverley and they have three teenage children, Naomi, Jonathan and Hannah. He grew up in Shankill Parish, Lurgan, where his father Norman Lockhart, Dean of Dromore, was rector. He studied

at Queen's University in Belfast, graduating with a BSc in Chemistry, and it was during his student days, when he was very involved in the Church of Ireland Centre at Queen's, that he felt a calling to ministry.

After graduating David went to Dublin to study theology. He was ordained 25 years last June. Following a curacy in St Mary's, Crumlin Road, Belfast, he spent several years as rector of St Stephen's and St Luke's in Belfast before his move to Cloughfern. He was North Belfast Rural Dean for five years.

Following the service on Thursday night, speeches of welcome for the new rector and his family were delivered in the church before the congregation retired to the halls of First Larne Presbyterian for light refreshments.

# Everyone can help expand and grow parish ministry

It was a number of years ago in Chester Cathedral when I first came across a Parish Reader, writes **David Cromie, Parish Reader, St Peter and St James, Belfast.**

Modestly robed and quietly spoken, he described his role as the provision low level ministry, mostly through reading services and being of general assistance to the clergy. He also told me it was a deeply satisfying task which he absolutely loved doing.

I left the cathedral thinking what an intriguing role this was - restricted perhaps, but variable. Powerless, but of great value. I thought little more about it until, something over a year ago, I was approached by my rector to consider the very same task in St Peter's.

My rector takes the view that everybody in the parish has a role to play and a task to do - whether they like it or not! Somehow he thought this role might suit me, and me it, and I have to say he has been correct.

No doubt being a traditional parish makes the role of a Parish Reader in St Peter's more immediately relevant than might be the case in other parishes, as we stick closely to the Book of Common Prayer in all services. This is confirmed by the fact that I am but one of three such Readers in the parish, all with distinct roles in ministry and all carefully utilised to perform differing tasks which suit our individual aptitudes and senses of calling. It is balancing this equation of talent and opportunity that makes the role work or not.

I suspect everyone who feels the hand of their rector on their shoulder suggesting this is a good role to consider feels utterly inadequate. Doubts fly through the mind - am I a fit person to take up a ministerial role, what will the parishioners think, am I really capable of doing this, what if I make a mess of the service?

Those fears must come across the minds of all aspiring clergy, let alone novice Parish Readers, but once you have found your voice and realised that to err is, indeed, human, and therefore forgivable, the true value of the role becomes apparent to those to whom you minister, the clergy you assist and yourself in terms of fulfilment.

It is not up to me to say whether or not I fulfil my role as Parish Reader well (the rector will tell me!), but it is up to me to

say what a sense of value and fulfilment comes out of it.

To anyone thinking of taking it up, I say try it, do what you can (so far I have avoided having to intone services, thank

goodness). Many could read minor services, most people could manage a reflection on a reading and everyone can help expand and grow ministry in their own parish - you even get the Bishop's blessing to speed you on your way!



Connor Diocesan Warden of Readers, the Rev Kevin Graham, right, with David Cromie, second right, on the occasion of David's commissioning as a Parish Reader in July 2017. Also pictured are the Rev Brian Lacey, rector, St Peter's, left, and the other Parish Readers, Forde Patterson and Tony Swan.

## How our Readers realise God's Call

God calls His people to serve Him and to be His witnesses in His world. Many are called to preach and teach in His name and one of the ways this is realised is through the ministry of Readers, **writes the Rev Kevin Graham.**

The call to ministry is a call to look outwards, to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ through words and actions that help people to make sense of the varied contexts of their daily lives; it is a call to take seriously the very real questions that people have about meaning and purpose and their own personal, spiritual quests (1). Readers can be ideally placed to be a part of the Church's response to all these questions.

The public ministry of the Reader carries with it the recognition and authority of the Church and accountability to the Bishop. In the Church of Ireland, we have two distinct ministries within the public ministry of Reader. There are Parish Readers and Diocesan Readers. You can read reflections in this article from both a Parish Reader and a Diocesan Reader.

Practically, the significant differences are that a Parish Reader serves in a Parish and may not preach, whilst Diocesan Readers can serve anywhere within a diocese and are trained in preaching and hold a licence from the Bishop to preach.

Both may assist in the administration of the chalice at the Holy Communion, read Morning and Evening Prayer, lead those parts of the Holy Communion where appropriate, and lead other informal worship.

The call to Reader ministry, either as a Parish Reader or Diocesan Reader, is tested by the Church before training can commence and the Reader is commissioned.

The ministry of Reader is an ancient ministry of the Church and was previously



part of the pathway to exploring other forms of public ministry, including ordination.

It is now seen as a ministry with a calling in its own right. For this reason, Readers, either Diocesan or Parish, should never be seen as a resource to be used only when other ministers are not available, but they should be enabled to exercise their ministry at every possible occasion.

That being said, I know many enjoy the opportunity to cover for rectors during vacations and assisting during vacancies.

Every Diocesan Reader should maintain a link with their home parishes, for the ongoing support of their rectors is vital for their ministry.

The value of the Diocesan Readers' ministry has been fully recognised by the Bishops of the Church of Ireland and this has been evidenced in the new provision of training for Diocesan Readers provided for by the Church of Ireland Theological Institute and reinforced in various ways in the dioceses.

This two-year course facilitated at CITI results in the award of a Certificate in Ministry for successful candidates. With the local nature of the Parish Reader, training is completed in the local context and upon completion of a year's probation, the Parish Reader is confirmed in their position.

All enquires with reference to Reader ministry should be directed to

your rector in the first instance who shall contact the Warden of Readers to progress matters. Parish Readers may begin their training at any point in the year with the agreement of their rector and the Warden of Readers.

Diocesan Reader training at the moment begins in February every year, with applications closing in early December the previous year. Rectors can obtain details from the Warden of Readers.

A book to read for those who feel called to this ministry is noted below. It is focused in the Church of England but in matters to do with ministry and vocation, it is very helpful.

1. Rowling and Gooder, (2009) Reader Ministry Explored London:SPCK

# I have been given so much by the people

Being a Diocesan Lay Reader in Connor Diocese has been an adventure and a learning curve! It has also been a great privilege and honour, says **Maxine Judge, St Polycarp's Parish.**

A lot of my colleagues have experience in other areas of church life which led them to decide to serve in this way. It was interesting during our training to learn from them and hear their very different life experiences.

Some work regularly in one church and others cover services in other churches too. We all have varied experiences, but are all welcomed by the churches we are in and enjoy the fellowship we find there. Many of my colleagues regularly lead services and deliver sermons. They can also be busy in many other activities in the church.

Keeping up a relationship with a 'home church' can help ground our ministry and bring us back to our early inspirations and influences.

It has been valuable to meet up again at Diocesan Lay Reader training and look at how we are all getting on and support and encourage each other.

One thing we all agree is that every church is different, so each service is different.

You get to learn the tweaks, thanks to help from key people within each church and also the congregations who are very accommodating, encouraging and patient!

It has been a pleasure and privilege to get to know people as a part of the ministry team - sometimes it is good to be that little bit 'to the side,' i.e. not the rector, as people can have a different relationship with you. You are still valued and identified with the church and have the honour of sharing different moments in people's lives.

I have found getting to know a different church community interesting and rewarding. People are willing to encourage you and develop you, and if you ask for feedback they are very happy to give it!



Diocesan Lay Reader Maxine Judge.

I have had my fair share of 'learning situations' and hope to have many more in the future. When I started in St John's, Malone, I remember the churchwardens feverishly sweeping up small bits of rubber. I then realised that they were coming from my disintegrating sandals!

I think the calm approach and quiet sense of humour of all involved in any church has helped. I have learned to slow down my delivery and although my sermons will always be relatively short, sometimes I surprise the congregation by going onto a third or fourth page!

I have been given so much by the people of the church; they have steered me in the right direction regarding worship and have given me the space to grow and get my own 'voice.'

I would recommend becoming a Diocesan Reader. It is a great opportunity to get to know other churches and other ways of worship within the Church of Ireland liturgy. I would also encourage churches who welcome Diocesan Readers to make sure that they get to know them and what they can offer; there is such a range of life experiences out there!

**The Rev Kevin Graham is Connor Diocesan Warden of Readers**

# All Aboard for new Sunday School aid

Ripple Connor Children's Ministry is piloting a new Sunday School programme called 'All Aboard' during the academic year 2018- 2019.

The 36-week programme is made up of 10 units, with a range of Old and New Testament stories and will be suitable for children aged 3-11 years. The material has been written by Jill Hamilton, Andrew Neill and Karen Webb from Connor's Children's Council, and is accessible to a range of abilities, including children with special educational needs.

The programme includes Bible storytelling, quizzes and challenges, prayer activities and response activities, such as games, crafts and experiments. All the stories are drawn from the 'Lion Storyteller Bible' by Bob Hartman and Krisztina Kállai Nagy.

The 'All Aboard' programme includes lots of ideas to enhance storytelling, such as visuals, impromptu dramas and interactive stories.

Each month is based around a Bible character or a group of inter-related stories. The fourth week of each month is the



'Dive In' week, where children can revisit the stories they have learned that month through activities.

There are six activity ideas for each 'Dive

In' week. These activities include open-ended tasks which give children a chance to make their own response to what God has been teaching them over the month.

The activities are varied to suit a wide range of needs so that children of different genders, ages, abilities and spiritual styles will be able to choose what appeals best to them. Leaders can pick and choose what activities will be suitable for their group, depending on the children they have, the space available and the number of leaders, etc.

Six parishes in Connor Diocese are taking part in the pilot year. They are Antrim; Armoy and Drumtullagh; Glenavy; Lambeg; Muckamore and St Stephen's and St Luke's. This means there are churches participating from each archdeaconry.

Jill Hamilton, Connor Children's Project Development Officer, has been visiting participating churches to introduce the material to leaders and provide resources to help each group get started. The parishes involved will be able to give feedback to the writing team so that the resource can be adapted and refined before being printed.

The final resource will be available to all Sunday Schools in Connor Diocese from September 2019.



St Michael's, Church of Ireland Lower Shankill.



Superheroes at Christ Church, Lisburn.

## Holiday Bible Club fun!



Christ Church and St John's, Ballyclare.



Lisburn Cathedral



All Saints' Parish, Antrim.



# Alison 'privileged' to be GB NI President

Alison Stevenson, a parishioner of St Paul's, Lisburn, was commissioned as President of Girls' Brigade Northern Ireland on September 23, the first member of the Church of Ireland to hold this honour.

Alison has been a GB leader in St Paul's for more than 30 years. The company has 180 members. She became Captain in 2006 and has also been District Secretary, District Commissioner and she was on the PE team at national level. She was on the Brigade Council for a year before moving into the Executive last year as Vice President of GB NI.

Alison, who is Principal of Tonagh Primary School in Lisburn, is married to Albert and they have a daughter, Rebecca. She said the year as Vice President had been valuable. "It gave me an insight into many of the things I will be doing as President, but I will now have more involvement in the wider GB and European Fellowship and will also represent GBNI at international level.

"GB is an amazing organisation and this year celebrates its 125th anniversary. It is the largest uniformed organisation in Northern Ireland, which is incredible with so much to distract girls these days."

Since it was founded in Dublin, GB now operates in 52 countries worldwide. In Northern Ireland, there are 287 companies, of which 22 are Church of Ireland. An interdenominational organisation, GB NI has a 22,000 members.

The GB motto is 'Seek, Serve and Follow Christ.' The crest is used the world over, and includes symbols of Christianity - a Cross, a lamp, a crown and a torch.

"GB is built on four pillars - spiritual, physical, educational and service," Alison said. "The main focus is spiritual as we are a Christian organisation, but what has made GB so unique is that it has moved with the times whilst remaining totally committed to its core values and beliefs.

"GB girls now have the opportunity to



Mrs Alison Stevenson.

participate in a range of events, including worship services, sports of all kinds and many more current and relevant activities and programmes."

As part of the 125th anniversary events, Alison travelled to Uganda with GB NI earlier this year. Working with Fields of Life, GB NI has raised funds for new buildings at a school in the village of Karwa, and Alison was there for the official opening in May. "We were blown away by the children's appreciation, enthusiasm and joy in living. They had nothing, yet they had everything," she said.

Events to mark the 125th year include an anniversary service in each district, a Leaders' Ball, and outings for all ages.

Alison said it was a real privilege to take on the role of GB NI President. "I look at the names of past Presidents and I think 'Oh my goodness!' They have done amazing things and I am following them, but God has led me here and I will keep that at the core of everything I do," she said.

## All Saints' launches UniChurch Belfast

All Saints' Church, Belfast, launched its brand new evening service, UniChurch Belfast, on Sunday September 23.

Nearly 150 people from many nationalities and backgrounds gathered together to eat, chat, sing, hear from God's word and celebrate the start of the relaunched and renamed evening service.

UniChurch Belfast came about as a gospel initiative of All Saints' as part of the congregation's strategy to reach new people with the gospel of Jesus.

It opens with a free dinner, cooked by members of the morning congregation, followed by a service, with a renewed focus on music and a continued commitment to the exposition of God's Word. During the week, the church gathers in groups all over Belfast for bible study.

Dave Jensen, assistant minister of All Saints' Church, Belfast, said: "The purpose is simple: To see lives transformed through Jesus Christ to the glory of God."

## Derriaghy farewell



The Rev Canon John Budd has retired after more than 21 years as rector of Derriaghy Parish. A farewell evening of musical entertainment, tributes, thanks and presentations took place in the parish hall on September 14. Pictured are Canon Budd, his wife, Carla, and their family, Matthew, Harriet and Peter, accompanied by Robert Stinson, Christ Church, Derriaghy (left), and Carol Field, St Andrew's, Colin (right), who made the presentations on behalf of the parish. (Photo: Alan Walker)

## N Belfast Rural Dean

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

Brian studied Archaeology at Queen's University, Belfast. He was as Student Reader in St Thomas's, Belfast, and his parish placements included Finaghy and Upper Malone, and the Independent Evangelical Church in Gran Canaria.

In 2010, Brian was ordained as curate-assistant in the Parish of Kilconriola and Ballyclug, and he has been rector of St Peter and St James since June 2013.



## Living history!

As part of the celebrations marking the 350th anniversary of the consecration of the Middle Church, on September 8 Ballinderry Parish hosted historical tours of the sites associated with Ballinderry, namely Portmore, the Middle Church and the Parish Church. Two hundred and fifty people went on the tours and more than 100 visited the Middle Church independently. On September 9, 200 people attended a service of thanksgiving in the Middle Church. Pictured is tour guide Ian Megarry.



## Ballyrashane and Kildollagh team to visit South Sudan partners

Ballyrashane and Kildollagh Parishes will further their CMSI Partnership with Ibba Diocese, South Sudan, in October, when the Rev Amanda Adams, Diocesan Lay Reader Allan Bond and parishioner Olivia Clarke travel to Uganda.

This partnership was established more than seven years ago and the parishes have provided bicycles, paid for the training of a teacher and supported the building of the new Cathedral in Ibba. In 2014, the parishes hosted the Rt Rev Wilson Kamani, Bishop of Ibba.

During the current crisis in South Sudan, Ballyrashane and Kildollagh have prayed for the internally displaced people who have come to Ibba and raised funds to buy seeds and agricultural tools and to support the MU's literacy programme.

Due to insecurity in South Sudan, the team cannot visit Ibba, but will join a CMSI team in Arua, northern Uganda, at a Peace and Reconciliation Conference involving all of CMSI partner bishops and representatives from South Sudan.

This is a follow up to the Stormont Crossing Bridges Event which CMSI held last year, and an extension of the visit to Yei Diocese in exile in Arua in April.

Ballyrashane and Kildollagh parishioners have made a generous contribution towards the cost of the visit. The Parish Crafters' group has prepared gifts and resources, and the Mothers' Union is sending gifts and a Photo Book, while young people in the parish have provided pictures to be exchanged with pictures produced by the young people of Ibba.

In Arua, the three team members will listen to their partners' experiences of conflict, learning first hand of the difficulties which the people of South Sudan face. They will seek to support their partners through discussion, prayer, Bible teaching and youth training, they will also visit South Sudanese refugees temporarily accommodated in northern Uganda.

## St Cedma's concert

St Cedma's, Larne, will be hosting an organ recital and concert in aid of the Church Hall Building Fund on October 20. The concert begins at 7.30pm. Tickets £10 including a Harvest Supper.

# The Holy Land - 'This is My land..'

The Rev Canon David Humphries, rector of Kilbride Parish, has been leading pilgrimages to the Holy Land for more than 20 years.

His next pilgrimage, based in Jerusalem and Galilee, runs from May 14-24 next year, and he invites you to consider joining him on this spiritual journey.

David, who grew up in Belfast and attended St Bartholomew's Parish Church, Stranmillis, was a music and RE teacher, and also organist in St Mary's, Crumlin Road, and Stranmillis, before ordination in 1986.

He was curate-assistant in Ballyholme, Vicar Choral at Belfast Cathedral, and rector of St Molua's, Stormont, for 23 years before moving to Kilbride in 2016.

It was when he was in his early days at Stormont that he first heard a talk about the Holy Land, delivered by Dr Noel Donaldson who stepped into the breach when a speaker booked for a Church of Ireland Men's Society meeting cancelled at the last minute.

"Dr Donaldson had just been on a day trip, but he put his experiences across very well," David said. "Chatting to him afterwards, I commented that the parish should have a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and thought no more about it. I was not the sort of person to go on foreign holidays, and had never thought about the Holy Land before.

"But I found out later that, unknown to me, Noel had contacted Holy Land Christian Tours and I felt I had to follow through. I booked and led my first pilgrimage. It was a case of feeling my way. I had a Jewish guide who was very good. All I could do was look up

references in the Bible for the places we were going to see, and put together a few readings and prayers."

David said the pilgrimages developed over the next few years, with most pilgrims coming from his own parish. "There were not many people conducting pilgrimages in the early days. People came back more than once. They raved about it," he said.

In 2006, David approached McCabe Pilgrimages because he felt that the two-week tour offered by Holy Land Christian Tours was too long, and the key sites could be visited in a shorter break. "McCabe didn't push anything, but suggested a tour as they would do it, over 11 days, including travelling," he said.

"Previously all our guides had been Jewish, and did not join in our prayers and worship. McCabe introduced us to a new guide, Ravi, who had some Christian input.

"On that first pilgrimage with McCabe in 2006, I met Mrs Albina, owner of Albina Tours. On the morning we were due to go to Bethlehem she said we couldn't go as there had been some trouble, but she had already arranged a different visit. It was the only year we had to change our itinerary. All organisation is done on the ground, with the personal touch.

"I had wanted to go to Hebron to see the tombs of the patriarchs, but there always seemed to be trouble in Hebron. Ravi suggested it wasn't as bad as we thought. I go on a lot of private trips and





Ravi lives in Bethany, we got the bus no problem and now include it in some of our itineraries.”

All David's pilgrimages take in the main Holy Land sites, Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives, Via Dolorosa, Jericho, Mount Carmel, Capernaum, Caesarea Philippi and Nazareth. Last year, the tour included Samaria and Jacob's Well.

“That was a bit different,” said David. “I have never been received badly by anyone, but there were not many tourists in that area. We stopped at a post manned by young Israeli soldiers who were gobsmacked to see a busload of tourists!”

Varying the itinerary means that if people chose to come on more than one pilgrimage, they will see a lot more.

David said it is the land that draws him back year after year. “Some people are very inspired by Jerusalem, some would prefer Galilee because nothing has changed there, you can look across and see a young Jesus doing the same thing.

“For me it is God's land. Many times He says in the Old Testament, ‘this is My Land.’ That's what I feel.

“Pilgrimages to the Holy Land go back 1,700 years. People have gone to see the places where Jesus was. That's one reason I go back. Nowadays, there's another reason.

“When people went to the Holy Land in the early days there were no hotels. People had to stay with locals, and learn about their culture. Today the hotels, no matter how good, tend to be impersonal. I want my pilgrimages to get close to local people. Meeting other Christians isn't difficult, we meet them in the hotels, at the

sites we visit and in church. But we are also meeting Jewish and Muslim people. McCabe's slogan is ‘See the places, meet the people.’

“On the pilgrimage we visit the Jeel al-Amal School and Boys' Home in Bethany, an amazing place.”

Bethany, once home to Mary, Martha and Lazarus, is now a village in economic collapse, hidden from view behind the new Separation Security Wall.

The Jeel al-Amal (Generation of Hope) School and Boys' Home was founded in 1972 by Christian Palestinians, Alice and Basil Sahhar, who David knows well. Three hundred children are being educated in the primary school, and 100 boys live in the Home. The boys come from Jerusalem and from towns and villages in the Palestinian territories. Many are orphans or have endured terrible domestic problems.

“Here we have Christian and Muslim boys being taught about their faith,” said David. “The boys are all so friendly. They are protected from things going on outside and are being brought up together which is a miracle. There are very few places in Israel where that happens.” The orphanage is supported by the McCabe Educational Trust.

The cost of David's next pilgrimage in May is £2,175 per person, sharing a twin bedded room. “This covers flights, transfers, accommodation, food, entry to all the sites on the itinerary and even tips. “When people return home afterwards, they say that it is definitely worth the money,” said David.

Anyone interested in learning more about this pilgrimage should visit David's Holy Land website at [pilgrimage106.org](http://pilgrimage106.org).



# ...why David returns year after year



## Ballinderry's #Explore reaches isolated rural areas

Ballinderry Parish hosted its fourth annual teenage event, #Explore, over the summer, reaching out to young people in isolated rural areas.

Andrew Tuft, a member of the organising team, said: "The aim was to provide innovative ministry and teaching in rurally isolated parts of Ballinderry and surrounding areas – Aghalee, Maghaberry, Glenavy and Crumlin – and to share the gospel within a cross-community setting.

"We also hoped to build relationships with the teenagers and introduce them, their family and friends to a local church family and encourage them to attend meetings within our Youth Fellowship programme."

The programme ran over three days and included fun-filled activities such as NERF Wars, inflatable assault course, archery and a roller disco. At each meeting, one of the leaders shared their testimony and opportunities were given for the teenagers to ask questions.

On the final night, the young people and youth leaders heard a closing message from Joel Hutchinson, E3 Schools Worker for the local area within Scripture Union.

Andrew said: "The success of this outreach has encouraged us as a leadership team to prayerfully consider the possibility of hosting a regular Youth Fellowship programme in these rurally isolated areas, having seen the potential that has been evident the last four years.

"Youth work in rurally isolated areas continues to be a challenge for all of us and after seeing teenagers come from far and wide to attend this event we are excited and hopeful about what could be."

He said young people left feeling more empowered and connected to Christ. "Each session was uplifting and we wanted our young people to understand that they play an important role not only in today's church but in the future of the church," Andrew added.

Building on #Explore, the parish hopes to further enhance its teaching programme by using innovative ministry to raise up lifelong followers of Jesus within the local community and to run events that are not only fun but that encourage and equip the teenagers in their relationship with Jesus.



The Christ in Youth team from America during their tour of Belfast, with Connor Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie.

## Growing connections with Christ In Youth

Connor Youth Council hosted a group of American young people and their leaders from Christ In Youth for two weeks at the start of the summer.

The 25 young people and leaders came from Kansas, Ohio, Oklahoma and Missouri. As they settled in, they received training for their service as part of the Event Crew during Summer Madness.

The visitors were given a tour of Belfast, including St Stephen's Parish, with the Rev Canon Jim Carson and Mrs Heather Carson, and the North Belfast Centre of Mission Connect Base, where they heard from Church Army Evangelist Karen Webb.

The team then travelled to Glenarm for Summer Madness, where they helped with health and safety, cleaned showers, collected rubbish and welcomed people.

As the team served at the festival and worshipped alongside the young people from Connor, the connections between

Connor Diocese and America developed.

The second stage of the team's visit was participation in Streetreach. The Christ In Youth team mixed in with Connor Youth in teams tasked with different activities over the following few days in Glenavy.

To finish up their trip, the team spent a day exploring the north coast. That evening, there was a last reunion with all the Connor young people. Diocesan Youth Officer, Christina Baillie, said: "It was a joy seeing the young people spending time together after having served God together, worshipping Him together and challenging one another in their discipleship."

Before departing, the team joined in Sunday morning worship in the Church of the Resurrection at Queen's University.

## Clergy cook up at treat at the Summer

The sun shone on Summer Madness, the annual youth festival held on the Glenarm Castle Estate from June 29-July 3.

Sunday tea time has traditionally been the time for the Bishop's Barbecue, but as the Bishop of Connor was on sabbatical, some of his trusty colleagues stepped into the breach.

Under the guidance of head chef, the Rev Canon Mark Taylor, who has run the Connor Summer Madness kitchen for several years, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor; the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada, and the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor, undertook the burgers.

The Rev Philip Benson, chair of



Engage Connor Youth, and the Rev Andrew Campbell, coped well with the sausages. There were lots of helpers with salads and sauces, and in total around 200 meals were served.

The previous evening Canon Mark had served up 148 helpings of chili – hot food for a hot day!



# Fantastic weekend taking the Castle!

The annual Connor Takes the Castle residential brought young people and leaders from nine parishes together for a fantastic weekend.

The schedule was action packed, with late night walks around the lake, team sports, raving in the basement and the infamous Connor's Got Talent.

James and Elise Turner from the Church of the Resurrection led sessions, with Kate Peden from Space, Jordanstown, facilitating worship. Young people heard about faith and doubt, asking big questions, and, if they are doubting God,

what they can do to grow in their faith.

Salt Factory Sports were there on Saturday afternoon to create space for young people to make friendships over team games as they battled it out in volleyball, dodgeball, ultimate frisbee and more.

Diocesan Youth Officer, Christina Baillie, said: "This weekend is fantastic for allowing young people and leaders from different

parishes across the diocese to get to know one another, make connections and share their faith with others of the same age.

"Connor Youth Council puts together an incredible weekend with lots of activities as well as opportunities for discipleship for young people with the leaders they come with."

Christina added: "It provides a great way to kick off the year and bonds groups so they are ready to head back to each parish enthusiastic and engaged."

The dates for Connor Takes the Castle 2019 are confirmed as September 6-8, back in Castlewella Castle, and Connor Youth Council would encourage any groups to join with them for this annual event.



All the fun of the Castle! The Connor young people and leaders at Castlewella in September.

## Madness BBQ!

The festival provided great opportunities for parishes from across the diocese to bring a group of young people along to experience all that Summer Madness has to offer! They attended main stage worship, listened to seminars, drank hot chocolate, sat in the sun, sang and danced late into the evening, played sports and prayed together.

Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer, was involved in two seminars during the festival. She shared about spiritual disciplines and encouraged young people to try out different ways of recognising God's blessing in other aspects of their lives. Christina was also on a panel for youth workers speaking about expectations they face in ministry.

## Streetreach impacts Crumlin and Glenavy

Connor Youth Council was excited to be back in Glenavy and Crumlin for Streetreach for a second year.

A team of 60, including the American Christ In Youth team, accomplished a lot over a few days. Each morning there was team time, with teaching from a member of the parish, followed by worship and discussion time.

The teams went out each afternoon and evening to engage with the local community. They ran a free car wash, kids' club, youth drop in, carnival and visited a nursing home.

Diocesan Youth Officer, Christina Baillie, said: "While the teams were doing lots of practical things, often the main aim was to be able to make a connection and speak with people about who God is. We had several team members share their testimonies with people in the community, pray for businesses and give out Bibles."



Heading back to base in Glenavy Parish Hall after a litter lift during Streetreach

One of the activities which had a big impact was clearing an area where local young people would hang out. This area was littered with rubbish and broken glass. The team spent several hours working incredibly hard to make this place more pleasant for the young people to spend time in. This provided opportunities for conversations with the young people who would spend time here and wanted to explore questions about faith.



## Celebrating 10 years of ordination

A special service was held in Belfast Cathedral on June 15 to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the ordination of a number of Connor clergy. The service was hosted by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, and three of the four clergy ordained in June 2008 were present - the Rev Helen MacArthur, the Rev John Farr and the Rev Martin Hilliard.

Dean's Vicar at Belfast Cathedral, the Rev Canon Mark Niblock, was ordained with Helen, John and Martin, but unfortunately was unable to be present.



Celebrating 10 years! The Rev Helen MacArthur, the Rev John Farr and the Rev Martin Hilliard, with the Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast.

## History book updated

Jordanstown Parish, which this year celebrates its 150th anniversary, launched an updated History of St Patrick's Church, on September 28.

The book reflects on 150 years of worship and praise in Jordanstown.

The Church of St Patrick was consecrated on August 15 1868 by the Rt Rev Robert Knox, Bishop of Down, Connor & Dromore.

The book is on sale from the Church Office.



The leaving scholars, from left: Mathew Greenaway, Beth Aiken, Melanie Campbell, Vivien McCullough, Ronnie Drury. (Jamie Howe was not able to attend the service.) They are pictured with the Rev Canon David Humphries (outgoing chair); Dean Stephen Forde and the Rev Canon John Auchmuty (incoming chair).

# Scholars rewarded

The annual Evensong of the Down & Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Scheme took place in Belfast Cathedral on September 23.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, awarded certificates on behalf of the Organ Scholarship Board to those scholars who had completed the three-year course: Mathew Greenaway, Beth Aiken, Ronnie Drury, Vivien McCullough and Melanie Campbell. The sixth graduating scholar, Jamie Howe, was unable to attend as he is currently studying at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester.

As a new innovation, three of the finishing scholars - Mathew Greenaway, Beth Aiken and Vivien McCullough - gave a short organ recital before Choral Evensong.

During the service, new scholars were also welcomed to the course: Natalie Bell, Glenn English, Tanya Hanna, Jack McCabe and Sean Turner.

The congregation included the scholars, their families and friends, tutors, Michael

McCracken, Dr Joe McKee and the Rev Dr Ian Mills, members of the Board of Management and members of the Cathedral community.

Several changes were announced following the service: The Rev Amanda Adams has resigned as secretary to the Board of Management after several years of dedicated work, and the Rev Canon David Humphries stood down as chair, having completed six years in that role.

The new secretary is Mr Timothy Wilson, Organist and Choirmaster at Jordanstown, and the new chair is to be Canon John Auchmuty, Rector of Knock.

Over refreshments, Canon Humphries thanked Dean Forde for allowing the Board to hold the service in the Cathedral and gave some words of encouragement to the new scholars.



## Stephen commissioned as a Church Army Evangelist

Stephen Whitten from the Diocese of Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission, Connect Base, was commissioned as a Church Army Evangelist at a service in the Church Army's Wilson Carlile Centre in Sheffield on July 17. The service was led by the Bishop of Woolwich, the Rt Rev Karowei Dorgu, (right) and Church Army Chief Executive, Mark Russell (left) and Stephen, pictured centre, was commissioned along with two other new Evangelists, Hannah Seal (Llandaff Centre of Mission), and Josh Smith (St Asaph Centre of Mission).



# New hope of a new life in Whitehead

Parishioners from St Patrick's Parish Church, Whitehead, are striving to give new hope – and a new life – to a family from war-ravaged Syria.

They are members of the Whitehead Small World Group, which includes people from other churches in the area, as well as others who have no faith background.

The group is hoping to provide a new home to a family from Syria and to support that family for their first two years in Northern Ireland.

Members have raised substantial funds, identified a house and have applied to the Home Office for the Community Sponsorship Scheme.

Jeni McAughey, a parishioner of St Patrick's and group member, said: "For most of us it is impossible to imagine what life must be like for people in Syria.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand have already been killed. Four million have had to leave their country. They had no choice and now they are living in dire conditions in refugee camps in neighbouring countries like Turkey, Iraq and Egypt.

"Imagine being forced from your home into another country, leaving everything behind and knowing you may never go back."

Jeni said the group in Whitehead came together to do something practical to help and is working closely with Citizens UK and in conjunction with the UK government which has pledged to allow 20,000 vulnerable refugees to settle in the UK.

She said the selected family will have access on arrival to work and/or benefits, education and health services. "Our aim will be to provide practical support for the family for up to two years, while they become familiar with their new home and settle into our community. With time they will become more independent and need less support," Jeni said.

"Our family, having been chosen and processed by The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, will arrive from the borders of Syria with very few possessions, after a period of very challenging and frightening experiences."

The Whitehead Small World Group has raised enough money to meet the Home Office requirement for a guarantee, sourced what the group hopes will be a suitable house, and is organising a team of volunteers to support the family.

"It is our hope that other communities and towns will consider doing something similar and we are happy to support anyone interested in this," Jeni said.

The rector of Whitehead and Islandmagee, the Rev Canon Mark Taylor, said: "These people are our neighbours. We know people in Northern Ireland who have had to leave their homes suddenly and quickly as a result of terrorism. Can we do anything other than offer them a welcome?"



Mid and East Antrim Councillor Billy Ashe MBE and the Rev Alan McCann, Holy Trinity Woodburn, Carrickfergus, beside the Tommies in the shadow of Carrickfergus Castle.

## 'Ghost Tommies' - an important reminder

A number of 'Ghost Tommies' have been erected across Mid and East Antrim to commemorate the centenary of the end of the Great War.

The Rev Alan McCann, rector of Holy Trinity Woodburn Parish, whose great grandfather William Kelly was killed at the Somme, was involved in the project.

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council supported the Ghost Tommies initiative following a proposal by Councillor Billy Ashe MBE, who described the Ghost Tommies as 'powerful and striking displays in recognition and in honour of all those who made the ultimate sacrifice.'

Alan said: "When I became aware of the Ghost Tommies, I thought they were a wonderful idea, portraying hugely powerful symbolism."

The Ghost Tommies initiative is part of the 2018 Armistice Project, 'There But Not There,' which aims to educate all generations, particularly today's younger generation, to understand what led to the horrific loss of life.

## 150th anniversary service in Kilbride

A special service was held in St Bride's Parish Church on June 10 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the church's consecration.

The Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, was the guest preacher.

The church choir led the praise, supported by a number of guest singers, conducted by Beth Aiken and accompanied on organ and piano by Dr Joe McKee. Another special guest was the Rev Clyde Irvine, a former rector of St Bride's.



Congratulations to the 'Magnificent Seven' from All Saints' Parish, Eglantine, who have raised a fantastic £1,750 for Air Ambulance Northern Ireland. The seven ladies were sponsored to undertake the Belfast Fun Run in May.

This is the first parish fundraiser for Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, which marked its first anniversary this summer. The charity is located at Maze Long Kesh, not far from Eglantine Parish Church. The seven ladies are pictured presenting the cheque to Grace Williams, area fundraiser for Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, right.





An energetic welcome in Nyakagyera Primary School.

## A challenging time for GB mission team

A team from St Paul's Girls' Brigade Company, Lisburn, touched the lives of children in Uganda when they visited two schools during the summer.

The company raised £18,000 and partnered with Fields of Life which identified two schools - Nyakagyera Primary School, a church school near Kabale in Western Uganda, and the government-run Mmanze Secondary School near Kampala.

In June, company chaplain, the Rev Arthur Young, rector of St Paul's, commissioned the team's 12 members.

They left Lisburn on July 11, travelling to Uganda via Addis Ababa in Ethiopia and Kigali in Rwanda, from where they travelled overland to Uganda.

En route to Kabale, the team called at Karwa Centenary Primary School. GB NI celebrates its 125th anniversary this year

and as part of this celebration has funded the construction of this school.

They received a warm welcome at Nyakagyera Primary School. "The children were marching and dancing with drums and led us up to the school," the team reported. "Refresh was the first mission team to visit the school, so our arrival generated much excitement. It was a very humbling experience."

They met the head teacher and deputy head, both female. The lack of resources in the school was striking, but this did not present a barrier to the children's learning, the team said.

For five days, the team worked with

children and the women of the community. Lessons included Bible story, drama, memory verse, prayer, craft and singing. They also delivered a personal hygiene programme to boys and girls and a programme on menstrual health to the girls. There were more than 130 women from the community in attendance.

Their experiences during the second week in Mmanze Secondary School were very different from the experiences in Nyakagyera. Mmanze had a staff of 36 teachers, 30 of whom were male.

The team reported: "The head teacher seemed shocked to encounter an all-female team. We did not receive a warm welcome. Throughout the week in Mmanze, we experienced many difficulties and obstacles but, with God's help, we were able to overcome these.

"During the week, many issues emerged relating to gender inequality and child protection. Fields of Life in Kampala became aware of these issues and have undertaken to address them.

"It is our firm belief that God sent us here for a purpose. As an all-female team, we were able to experience the difficulties first hand and raise awareness of the issues within the school."

During the week, the team taught aspects of the Living Well programme which was particularly relevant as it addressed relationships, equality and violence.

"Although this was a challenging week with many children making disclosures to the team, we believe that we were given the opportunity to truly make a difference in relation to the treatment of the children in this school," the team said.

The fundraising for this project went solely to providing resources for the children of Uganda. St Paul's Company funded a girls' latrine for Nyakagyera and a girls' latrine and washroom for Mmanze, in addition to the equipment and resources they were able to provide for the schools.

The team said members had been blessed by their experiences. "The trip has benefited our GB Company as we have been able to share God's word with the people of Uganda in both a spiritual and practical way," the team reported.

"As individuals, we have grown spiritually and have had our faith reignited. We have a passion for mission at home and abroad and we hope that we may be an encouragement to other companies considering mission work."

This mission trip was grant-aided by Connor Mission Support Fund.



The St Paul's GB Refresh team with local people and clergy in Uganda.



Christ Church Parish, Derriaghy, has embarked on a major refurbishment of the church's historic spire which is at risk of crumbling.

The church dates back to 1872. Over the years, weather damage and corrosion has resulted in the crumbling of stonework in the spire. Iron elements have rusted and expanded, fracturing the masonry, and there is a big risk of stones falling onto the ground below – not a hazard to ignore!

The £651,000 project will dismantle, repair, and replace the stonework and ironwork to secure the structural integrity of the spire, bell tower and gable.

The problem was identified during a routine inspection in 2014. The spire is 134 feet high. It was concluded that if remedial action was not taken immediately, the church would have to close.

The Select Vestry invited tenders from conservation architects, and the firm of Alastair Coey, Belfast, was awarded the contract.

Cranes had to come on to the site to survey the spire and bell tower. A build-up of pigeon mess presented a health hazard but, to the relief of the Select Vestry, no bats are living in the bell tower.

The pillars at the narrow entrance to the church were removed to allow vehicles in so the experts could do an aerial survey. They are now safely stored in the old Stables building at the church and will be rebuilt when all the work is complete.

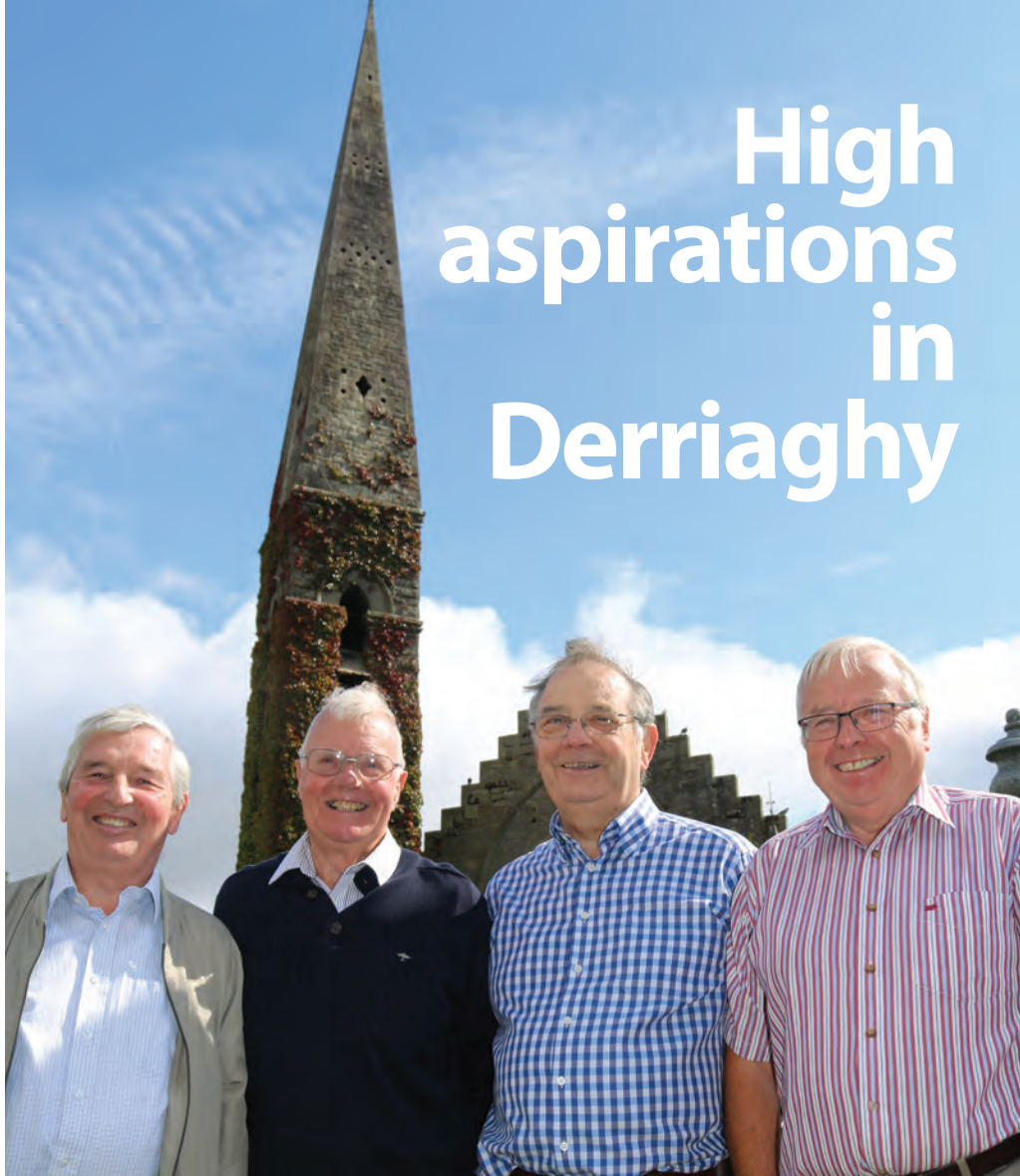
The contract for the work is now out to tender, but the Parish Sub-Committee overseeing this major work has successfully secured a number of grants. Some have been received, namely HLF £16,400 (to date), Esmee Mitchell Trust £4,000 and All Churches Together £6,700. Other funders have pledged grants to be awarded when work commences, and they are the Garfield Weston Trust £30,000, National Churches Trust £20,000 and Lady Dunleath Trust £1,000.

The parish's Spire Fund (fundraising began in July 2015) has already raised in excess of £100,000 towards the work.

As part of its funding obligations, the Church has to be open for non-religious purposes for 40 or more days per year, not an easy task as there are no toilets in the building and the pews are fixed, but the building does lend itself to concerts, lectures and choir recitals, and is also frequently visited by folk researching their family history.

The Derriaghy team comprises Brian

# High aspirations in Derriaghy



Safeguarding the future: From left: Leonard Jarvis, Robert Stinson, Brian Aitken and Trevor Field.

Aitken, project leader; Trevor Field, who is looking after the financial side of things, Vestry Member and former Parish Secretary, Robert Stinson, who has sourced the charity grant, Leonard Jarvis, Glebewarden, Billy Rogan and Margaret Haythorn. Former rector, the Rev Canon John Budd, previously chaired the committee and he has been succeeded by his deputy chair, the Rev Ken Gamble.

***"One of the most striking churches in Northern Ireland...the distinctive steeple and the crow stepped gable...the contribution the steeple has to the local landscape and the idyllic setting makes this church of particular importance." Northern Ireland Environment Agency***

Brian said something had to be done to prevent the spire collapsing or masonry falling from the tower. "The stone is quite bad, and the gaps between the stones are very big. Some could have fallen, and we cannot take that risk. We didn't really have a do nothing option," he said.

Trevor added: "When you look at Christ Church, you would agree that we cannot

let a church like this deteriorate. It is one of the nicest buildings of its type."

Robert said the interior of Christ Church was unique, having no central aisle and a wonderful boat-shaped pitch pine roof. "We are preserving the church for future generations. It would be very remiss if we did not do something," he said.

The appearance of the church is all the more striking because of the Virginia Creeper which climbs the tower, turning a fantastic red in autumn.

At present there are around 350 families attached to Christ Church. The church is a focal point for youth groups, community organisations and an integrated school, and as such is a key venue for bringing young people from Roman Catholic and Protestant backgrounds together.

Expressing thanks to the funding agencies which have pledged support for the restoration of Christ Church, Robert said: "This support has created a confidence that will see us through the project and we look forward to its completion and having a church that will remain open for worship for another 100 years or more."



## In tune at the second 'Connor Big Sing!'



Julie Harper (Lisburn Cathedral) conducting the choir.

The second 'Connor Big Sing' resulted in a choir of more than 60 people leading contemporary praise at a service in Lisburn Cathedral on Sunday September 16.

The 'Connor Big Sing' was introduced last year, and was such a success that Dean Sam Wright and the Chapter of St Saviour's at Lisburn Cathedral organised a second event.

Lisburn Cathedral Music Co-ordinator Stephen McLoughlin, along with Julie Harper, led and trained singers and musicians during the afternoon workshop which preceded the evening praise service.

The evening service was led by the Rev Danielle McCullagh, curate-assistant at Lisburn Cathedral, and the choir formed especially for the occasion was led by Julie, accompanied by Stephen, Cathedral organist Andrew Skelly, and musicians from across the diocese.



Dean Sam Wright addresses the congregation during the Contemporary Praise Service on the evening of the Connor Big Sing.



The Connor Big Sing. Photos by Matthew Cairns and Danielle McCullagh.



Kings for a day! Making crowns during craft time.

# Young adults help change young lives

A team of young adults from Lisburn Cathedral travelled to Uganda for the trip of a lifetime in July.

They were accompanied by Neville Jones, a Cathedral parishioner and Assistant Director of Abaana Ministries. For most, it was to be their first time in Africa.

Team members Owen Churton, Victoria Bell, Beth Irwin, Lee Boal, Erin Gardiner, Matthew Cairns, Becky and Emily Lester, Sara McGuckin, Zoe McLoughlin and Neville had a busy programme, working on various projects run by Abaana Ministries, a charity based in Bangor, Co Down.

Abaana has been working with children living in poverty in Uganda for 20 years. The charity has built 14 primary schools in some of the poorest areas and currently provides sponsorship for more than 1,600 children to receive an education.

Abaana also rescues children living rough on the streets of Kampala and brings them into the safety of its New Life Children's Home where they receive support and help with their education. The aim is to see the children happily and safely resettled with families where possible.

For the first week, the team was based at the Abaana Guest House in Kampala. The young people were accompanied by Ugandan guides, JP and Sarah.

After an initial briefing from Abaana Uganda's CEO Gill Olaaka, the team embarked on a 'Market Challenge' in the centre of Kampala, where they had to barter for and purchase fruit and vegetables at the huge food market.

Neville said: "This gave us our first experience of life in Kampala and the very real challenge of crossing roads and arriving on the other side in one piece!"

At a two-day Holiday Bible Club at Abaana's Strathearn Primary School, the team gave Bible talks, taught memory verses, sang choruses, made craft items and played outdoors with the children.

For two mornings, the team had the privilege of joining with Abaana social workers and colleagues from other charities for a programme of activities with some of the street children.

"The children, some as young as six, live a dangerous and lonely life on the streets of Kampala," said Neville. "For most of them, all they had was literally the clothes they were standing in. For many of the team, this was one of the most challenging times of the trip, as we played games, shared Bible talks and choruses and helped serve breakfast and lunch to the boys.

"When you saw at first hand the boys' situation and then thought of the comfort we live in at home in Northern Ireland, it was hard to put into words how you felt."

Following this street outreach, the team paid two visits to Abaana's New Life Homes, where boys who had been rescued from a life on the streets are able to live in safety, in a loving Christian environment, and attend the nearby New Foundations Primary School.





Members of the Lisburn Cathedral young adults' team with staff and children at Abaana' New Life Home.

"It was amazing to literally see at first hand how lives were being transformed from the hopelessness and emptiness of the streets," Neville said. "All the boys were full of an infectious enthusiasm, none more so than Douglas, who is sponsored by the Cathedral's Cameo Club. Everyone loved the time spent praying, talking and singing with the New Life Homes' boys. The team's agricultural expert, Lee Boal, even had some time to chase and eventually catch some of the free-range chickens!"

The week ended with a visit to St Juliana's Primary School, where the team spent some time with Derrick Ssongo, who is sponsored by Lisburn Cathedral's Mettle Youth Group, and the other members of the 2017 Abaana New Life Choir which toured the UK and Ireland.

Then it was off to meet the members of the 2019 New Life Choir, who will be touring from February to June 2019. They are currently learning all the new songs and the team was treated to a sneak preview.

Week two was very different. After attending the packed 7.30am service at Kampala Cathedral, the team travelled north for six hours to the town of Gulu, where they stayed at the Abaana office and travelled out to the Dr Andrew McAvoy Primary School each day.

"We received such a warm welcome from the school and the children soon became used to having 'muzungus' (white people) among them," Neville said.

The team members divided their time

between helping with building work on the new toilet block (funded by Dean Sam Wright's and Roy Totten's imprisonment in Crumlin Road Gaol earlier this year), and giving Bible talks, singing choruses, teaching memory verses, doing craft and playing games in the 30+ degree heat with the children and staff.

The three days flew past and at the end the team was treated to a farewell performance by some of the school children of the story of the Good Samaritan.

Back in Kampala, the team helped at a Holiday Club at Abaana's New Foundations Primary School and paid a final visit to the boys at the New Life Homes. They also had a quick visit to the Kampala Craft village before their journey home.

Neville said that the 'warm, friendly, inspiring people of Uganda' had taught the team some valuable life lessons.

"It was a huge privilege to share this experience of a lifetime with an amazing team of young people, who were so committed to taking on whatever challenges God placed in front of them and humbly seeking to serve the people they met," he said. "We are so grateful to everyone who prayed, supported and encouraged us in the months before and during the trip.

"Thanks also to all the Abaana staff members who worked tirelessly to make us feel so welcome and to ensure that our programme went so well."



The team helped build a new toilet block at the Dr Andrew McAvoy Primary School in Gulu, northern Uganda.



# Finding your Spiritual Direction

A number of people in Connor Diocese have completed training in Spiritual Direction in Drumalis, Larne, and would like to offer this service to people in in the Diocese.

The training was undertaken by Jeni McAughey, Jean Gascoigne and Arthur Kennedy. It was run by the University

of Maynooth and the Manresa Jesuit Centre of Spirituality. Jeni explained what Spiritual Direction was. "The term can be

off-putting, with thoughts that someone is telling you what to do," she said. "Maybe accompaniment or companionship might be better, but in any case, a Spiritual Director is someone you meet on a regular basis to talk about your spiritual journey.

"It is allowing someone to come alongside you and share your experiences, difficulties and joys. It has been defined as 'help given by one Christian to another, which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her.'

"The director is non-judgemental and independent, and meetings are confidential. The emphasis is on listening and supporting in an atmosphere of concern and respect for the other person. It is not a counselling relationship, although inevitably problems may be discussed.

"The experiences where we meet God are the basis for discussion in Spiritual Direction and the conversation is a three-way process involving director, directee and the Holy Spirit."

Jeni said that the directee and director agree a contract for meetings, and usually have a couple of meetings initially to see if both feel they can work together.

Jeni added: "We are conscious that others have been offering Spiritual Direction for some years and in fact some of us have attended Church of Ireland Directors in the diocese. We do not seek to take over this ministry but to augment it, and would hope to build close working relationships with established directors." For further information, visit the Support section of the Connor website.

## Derryvolgie appointment

The Rev James Boyd, Vicar of the Parish of Willowfield, Belfast, has been appointed as rector of Derryvolgie.

James has a degree in computer programming from Ulster University. He has worked with the Church of Ireland Year Out team, and was appointed Youth Ministry Co-ordinator in Moira Parish.

James is a former curate-assistant of Magheralin with Dollingstown, and a former rector of Holy Trinity, Dromore, Co Tyrone. He has been in Willowfield since 2015.

He is married to Shirley and they have two daughters. The Service of Institution will take place on November 13 at 8pm.

## Ordinations of Deacons and Priests



A Service of Ordination of Deacons for Connor Diocese was held in St Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn, on Wednesday September 5. Pictured are, back row from left: The Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; and the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor (preacher). Front row from left: The Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada; the Rev Peter Blake, who was ordained for the internship in the Parish of Whiterock and Glencairn, Belfast; the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; the Rev Jonathan Cockerill, who was ordained for the internship in the Parish of St Paul's, Lisburn; and the Rev Arthur Young, rector, St Paul's, Lisburn. Photo: Norman Briggs.



At the Ordination of Priests for Connor Diocese in Christ Church, Lisburn, on September 9 are, from left: The Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain; the Rev Derek Harrington, ordained for the Parish of Christ Church, Lisburn; The Rev John Rutter, Rural Dean, who preached; the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy; the Rev William Jeffrey, ordained for the Parish of St Mark, Ballymacash; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Rev Ian Mills, ordained for the Grouped Parishes of Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo; the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor; and the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada and rector of Christ Church, Lisburn.





The choir of St Polycarp's Parish Church pictured in the nave of Portsmouth Cathedral during their summer tour.

# St Polycarp's choir tour to Portsmouth

The choir of St Polycarp's, Finaghy, visited Portsmouth Cathedral for the first time for the choir's eighth annual summer tour, singing Choral Evensong on July 23 and 24, writes **the Rev Clifford Skillen**.

Previous tours have been to Westminster Abbey (2013, 2014 and 2017); the chapels of three Cambridge Colleges; Chester Cathedral; Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin; and St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

Portsmouth Cathedral is dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury and known locally as the Cathedral of the Sea, reflecting its close association with the city's seafaring community and the Royal Navy.

The choir was welcomed by the Cathedral's Precentor, Canon Dr Jo Spreadbury. The New Testament lessons at the two services were read respectively by the Rev Clifford Skillen, former rector of Finaghy, and the Rev Louise Stewart, rector of Finaghy and Upper Malone.

Conducted by St Polycarp's Director of Music, Simon Neill, the choir sang the St Polycarp Evening Canticles by Philip Stopford on the Monday evening and settings by Harwood in A flat on the Tuesday.

They also sang two anthems: On the Monday, Greater love hath no man by

John Ireland and on the Tuesday, Haydn's *Insanae et vanae curae*.

The guest organist was David Stevens, Organist and Master of the Choristers of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

Choir members were supported by a number of spouses and friends, and were joined by two past members now living and working in Manchester and London respectively.

The weather was sweltering, but the group took time to explore some of Portsmouth's attractions, including its redeveloped and bustling seafront and historic dockyard area, and the landmark, 170-metre high Spinnaker Observation Tower.

Simon said: "It was not only our honour but also a privilege to lead worship in this sacred place which boasts a terrific, youthful and vibrant choir.

"Each member of our choir, from the very youngest, self-funded their trip and all members always give so freely of their time and effort to continue the work and witness of St Polycarp's at home and farther afield."

## Marking 100 years of midwifery in Ireland

Midwives from across Northern Ireland attended a special Choral Evensong in Belfast Cathedral on June 8 celebrating 100 years of the Midwives Act in Ireland.

Around 150 serving and retired midwives, family, friends and others connected to midwifery attended this service, organised by the Royal College of Midwives.

The address was given by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, and Gill Walton, Chief Executive of the Royal College of Midwives, read a Lesson.

Belfast Cathedral parishioner Hazel McCalister, a midwife of 40 years, said: "I love being present for new life. It is such a privileged job."

## Honour for former Dean of Belfast



Former Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt) for his civic contribution in Belfast from Ulster University. (Photo: Nigel McDowell/Ulster University).

Former Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Ulster University at a ceremony in the Waterfront Hall on July 4.

The former Dean, who spent most of his ministry in Connor Diocese, was recognised for his civic contributions.

Earlier this year, John, a graduate of Queen's University, was awarded The Lambeth Cross by the Archbishop of Canterbury for his ecumenical work in Belfast.

At the ceremony on July 4, he received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt). John described the award as 'a huge honour' which he had not expected. On the evening of the ceremony, the former Dean returned to Belfast Cathedral as a guest at the University's post-graduation dinner where he gave an address.

## Layde musical evening



Layde Parish Church, Cushendall, hosted an evening of music on Sunday August 5. The church was packed, and the parish welcomed many talented young musicians playing various instruments. There was also poetry and Irish dancing in the aisle. The Rev Helen MacArthur, priest-in-charge of Ardclinis, Tickmacrean, Layde and Cushendun, said: "I thank God for this evening when our church was so full of people from across the community, happily enjoying themselves."





Connor Diocese presented Curry in a Hurry cookbooks for use by the students in Ulster University. From left are: Valerie Ash, Diocesan President; Glenda Campbell, Accommodation Officer UU; and Kathleen Lunn, Diocesan Projects rep.

## Vigil to highlight gender-based violence campaign

Connor Mothers' Union is holding a short Vigil and Reception at Belfast City Hall on November 26 to raise the profile of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign.

The guest speaker will be Jacqui Armstrong, All Ireland Faith and Policy Co-ordinator.

This international campaign takes place each year from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) until December 10 (International Human Rights Day).

Throughout the campaign, Mothers' Union joins many others globally in calling for an end to gender-based violence in all forms and in all societies.

Attendance at the vigil is by invitation only. Contact Connor MU Social Policy Contact, Cathy Doig (cathyedoig@btopenworld.com) for more information.

## Hard work in Antrim!

All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim, Mothers' Union branch has been very busy.

Members started a Holey Knitters Club on Monday evenings, crafting items for the Neonatal Unit and Children's Ward at Antrim Area Hospital. They have also been working on fiddle blankets for dementia patients in local nursing homes.

To celebrate 'Mums' in May,' they held a Mad Hatter's Tea Party. The hall was decorated by Noreen and William Hurst and the Rev Aaron McAlister and his wife Melanie. Mother's Union members provided supper and the children watched the film 'Cat in Hat,' while the adults enjoyed entertainment.

Branch members also collected more than 100 pairs of glasses to donate to Vision Aid Overseas through Specsavers.

# MU - 'much more than just a branch'

After six years as President of Connor Mothers' Union, Valerie Ash is preparing to hand over the reins to Sally Cotter.

Valerie said she had enjoyed her years as Diocesan President (DP). "It has been a great honour and privilege," she said. "I have had a lot of support from members and people I have worked with. It has been fantastic.

"I have also learned new skills, especially in IT. As DP you have to meet and interact with a lot of people at all levels. It improves your social skills and self-confidence.

"It is with joy that I have watched members taking on new roles and thriving. I have met fantastic people at branch, area, diocesan, All Ireland, central and worldwide levels."

Highlights of Valerie's six years have included the General Meeting, held at the Waterfront Hall, Belfast, in 2014. Valerie had a key role in welcoming delegates, and at the service held in St Anne's Cathedral.

Another highlight was representing the diocese at Her Majesty the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in 2017. The Queen is a patron of Mothers' Union, and every year six tickets to the Garden Party are issued to staff from Mary Sumner House, and representatives of the dioceses.

"It was a privilege to represent Mothers' Union members in Connor diocese at this once-in-a-lifetime event," Valerie said. She also represented MU on the Mall in London in 2016 at celebrations for the Queen's 90th birthday.

Other memorable anniversaries marked during Valerie's term included the 140th celebrations for central MU, which included a General Meeting and Service in Winchester Cathedral where Mary Sumner is buried, and the 'Big Sing' in Dublin for the 130th anniversary of MU in Ireland. Seventeen members of Connor Diocese travelled to join the choir on that occasion.

Also as part of the 130th celebrations, Connor Mothers' Union welcomed All Ireland President, Phyllis Grothier, and Worldwide President, Lynne Tembey, to Ballycastle during their pilgrimage around the 12 dioceses in Ireland in May 2017.

Many other regular activities in the MU calendar have kept Valerie busy over the six years, including Festival Services,

prayer breakfasts, Mary Sumner Day, area dinners and social events.

"Connor Mothers' Union is behind many projects that touch people's lives, and always prompt a magnificent effort from members," Valerie said. "They include knitting trauma teddies and little garments for babies in neo-natal units, publishing a student cookbook and providing washbags for hospital patients.

"Our 'Away from it all' holidays programme has touched 33 lives so far this year by offering families much-needed breaks. Twenty nine MU members volunteer at the Belfast Child Contact Centre on Saturdays."

Connor Mothers' Union is also supporting Baby Basics, an initiative run by staff of Connor's Connect Base Centre of Mission, to support young mothers and babies in north Belfast.

On the worldwide stage, the MU Relief Fund supports communities hit by a disaster, and development work aims to teach people to become self-sustaining.

Valerie spoke positively about the Mothers' Union's MULOA initiative (Mothers' Union Looking, Observing, Acting). "This is looking at Mothers' Union in the future, identifying how we need to listen to the church, the Bible, the community, MU members and clergy, and to look at what we are doing and what we could do," Valerie said.

"At present we have Trustees and members who are very good leaders. We are now a charity and have changed our central constitution to be more known and at one with our worldwide constitution.

"Only two per cent of members are in England, the other 98 per cent are in India and Africa. The idea is that countries be more self-sufficient, rather than looking to the UK to support them."

Valerie said that MU was always seeking new members. "We have a very loyal membership, but our members are getting older, we need to get younger more active members involved," she said. "People may not have time to go to all the branch meetings, but if they joined at diocesan





Mrs Valerie Ash will complete her six-year term as Connor Diocesan President at the end of 2018.

level they could still support us.”

Looking back on her time as Connor Diocesan President, Valerie said the

main challenges she faced had been communications across such a large diocese, both geographically and numerically, and getting people to put

themselves forward for leadership roles. She said there was much parishes could do to support Mothers' Union, including giving non-driving members a lift to meetings or offering facilities for meetings and events.

Valerie said she would miss the members, Trustees and the general fellowship of Mothers' Union when she steps down, although she will remain a member of the Whitehead branch and a Connor Trustee for a year.

“I would hope in future to get involved in other Mothers' Union projects. It is a great organisation,” she said. “I would like to thank the clergy for all their support, especially our Chaplain, Archdeacon Stephen McBride, and Bishop Alan.

“Thanks to all involved in leadership, the branch leaders, area chairs, Trustees and Executive committee.”

“Mothers' Union is a great family at UK and worldwide level. It is much, much more than just a branch.”

Learn more about Connor Mothers' Union at [www.connormothersunion.org](http://www.connormothersunion.org).

# Sally takes on role of President

**In January, Mrs Sally Cotter will take over as Diocesan President of Connor Mothers' Union.**

A former primary school teacher, Sally has been a member of Mothers' Union since 1989, and has held posts at all levels.

Her first branch was St Nicholas, Carrickfergus, where she was branch young members' rep and Carrickfergus area education rep. She was on the Prayer and Spirituality Unit and in 1996 was appointed Diocesan Marketing Co-ordinator.

In 2001, Sally became All-Ireland Marketing Co-ordinator and in 2007 was appointed to the Marketing Unit Committee at Mothers' Union headquarters in Mary Sumner House.

She was Diocesan Worldwide rep from 2007-2013, and since 2013 has been Vice-President of Fundraising and Communications in Connor Diocese.

Sally joined the Broughshane branch of Mothers' Union in 2010, when her husband, the Rev Dr Bob Cotter, became curate-assistant in the parish of Skerry Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin.



Mrs Sally Cotter.

A native of Dollingstown, near Lurgan, Sally met Bob when they were both singing with the St Anne's Cathedral (Belfast) Evening Choir in 1979.

Singing is not Sally's only musical talent. She was organist in First Lurgan Presbyterian Church for five years and in Holy Trinity Parish Church, Woodburn, for 13 years. She currently plays in Donegore Parish, and has been a church organist for 30 years!

She ran a Mothers' Union choir in Carrickfergus for 21 years. Named

'Sally's Singers,' the choir sang all over Ireland, north and south, and raised money for charity.

Sally has been a trustee of Carrickfergus Home Start for 20 years, an organisation she says has aims closely linked to Mothers' Union, namely helping families and children. She has also been a Sunday School Superintendent and a Girls' Brigade Officer.

Sally taught in King's Park Primary School in Newtownabbey for 31 years before taking early retirement. She and Bob have one son, Christopher.

“I am looking forward to the challenge of this new role,” Sally said. “I would like to get new members involved and keep all members up to date with our project work.

“I am keen to raise the profile of Mothers' Union. We are blamed for being tea makers but this organisation is so much more than that.”

Although she officially takes over from Valerie Ash as Diocesan President in January, Sally's commissioning will not take place until the Connor Mothers' Union Festival Service in April 2019.



## Introduction of the Rev Philip Benson

The Rev Philip Benson was introduced as Curate-in-Charge of the Parish of Kilwaughter and Cairncastle with All Saints' Craighill on September 2.

The service in All Saints' Parish Church was led by the Rev Canon Mark Taylor, Rural Dean, and the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada. The Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast, preached.

Philip is married to Carolyn, and they have a daughter, Hannah. A native of Bangor, Philip studied Theology at Queen's University, and later worked for Goldsmiths Jewellers while completing a Theology Master's Degree part-time. In 2009, he began working as a youth worker full-time.

Philip served his deacon internship in the Grouped Parishes of Finaghy and Upper Malone. He became curate-assistant in Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo following his ordination as a priest in September 2015. He is chair of the Connor Youth Council.

At the service, Mr Harry Carter paid tribute to Philip on behalf of the Grouped Parishes of Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo, while the family was welcomed by Maureen McGaughey from Kilwaughter and Cairncastle with All Saints'.



At the service of Introduction of the Rev Philip Benson are, from left: Dean Stephen Forde (preacher), the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada, William Patton (Reader), the Rev Philip Benson, the Rev Canon Mark Taylor, the Rev Harold Sharp and the Rev David Lockhart.

## Festive festival invite

Mossley Parish invites you to its 'Hope of the World' Christmas Tree Festival in the Church of the Holy Spirit from November 29 until December 2.

The Festival of 40 seasonal trees will include a poppy display to commemorate those who fell during World War One. There will be musical entertainment and refreshments in the Parish Centre.

For more information or to book catering for groups, please contact the Parish Centre on 028 9083 2936 or email: [mossleyparish@btinternet.com](mailto:mossleyparish@btinternet.com).



To mark the 125th anniversary of the Brigade, 13 members of the CLCGB staff were invited to attend the Royal Garden Party at Hillsborough Castle on September 4 in the presence of HRH Princess Anne.

# CLCGB in a buoyant and confident place

On September 30, members of the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade gathered in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, to celebrate 125 years serving the Church of Ireland, **writes Johnny Conn, CLCGB Staff Officer.**

Two companies were established in Dublin in 1893, and another two were added in 1894. The first company in Belfast, for St Luke's, Northumberland Street, was formed in 1895 by curate, the Rev James Archer. Soon, almost every diocese had its CLB companies and battalions were established in Armagh, Belfast, Derry, Dublin and Limerick. In 1909, Derry Cathedral established a Church Girls' Brigade, and other Girl units followed.

The Great War had dreadful consequences for the Brigade. Companies were closed as they lost their officers and members to the war effort. When the war ended, the main strength of the Brigade was to be found in the north, in the 1st Down, Connor and Dromore Battalion.

A successful rebuilding process took place and new CLB companies were established across Northern Ireland. The Ulster Regiment was formed (1945), its first Commanding Officer being Mr Samuel Waring DCM, of Christ Church, Lisburn.

New CGB companies opened and the 1st Battalion Church Girls' Brigade was established, under the command of Mrs Margaret Twinem from Seagoe, Portadown. The CLB and CGB amalgamated in 1978.

In recent years, the Brigade has experienced challenging times, losing strength in urban areas, particularly in Belfast. In the last five years, the Brigade has worked hard, under its Commanding Officer, Melvyn Lockhart, and Development

Officer, Victoria Jackson, to make progress.

Companies have been enrolled or re-enrolled at Aghalee, Dromore (Clogher), Drogheda, Dunmurry, Killinchy, Lambeg, Christ Church, Lisburn, and St Michael's, Belfast, and there is interest being shown in other parishes. Approximately 400 new members have joined.

As the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade marks its 125th anniversary, it is in a confident and buoyant place, and ready to serve our Church for another 125 years at least.

The anniversary was marked by a Parade and Service of Thanksgiving in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh. At the service, the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, dedicated a new Colour in memory of former Commanding Officer, Harry Anderson, and presented a new trophy, The Archbishop's Award, for the Champion Company of the Brigade.

Commemorative medals were given to junior and senior members and officers, with a new badge for younger members.

To mark the 125th anniversary, 13 members of the CLCGB Staff were invited to attend the Royal Garden Party at Hillsborough Castle on September 4. Later that day, Rebecca Martin from Magheragall Company and Thomas Latimer from Broomhedge Company were presented with their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award by the Princess Royal.



# All Saints' mission work in South Africa

A team of 10 from All Saints' Parish, Belfast, spent two weeks in July in Durban, South Africa, where they partnered with a Church in Umhlanga, reports **Lydia Mayes**.

The rector of Christ Church, Umhlanga, is the Rev Grant Retief. He has been at the church for more than eight years and has a great team working alongside him for all ministries in the large and diverse community the church serves.

The church reaches African communities such as the Zulus, Afrikaans, the large Indian community and also the white community. It brings them together in a safe, non-racist space and preaches the gospel faithfully to them.

The church is between a Muslim mosque and a Hindu temple. It has excellent relationships with its neighbours, whilst being a clear and faithful gospel witness.

During their first week, team members attended the church's Winter School which

ran over three nights, with the Rev Trevor Johnston, rector of All Saints', speaking on two of them.

The School allowed the team and the church members to gain insight and ask questions on four key topics; human sexuality, poverty, conscience and true womanhood.

On the Wednesday, the group visited Ikethelo Children's Village, an orphanage about an hour away. In the morning, they organised a three-hour sports day with a group of around 40 children, aged 11-13.

The children enjoyed games, including running races, obstacle courses, tug of war and other team games. There was time for a talk and for the children to learn a memory verse.

The team left them gifts, courtesy of the All Saints' knitting club, and these were greatly appreciated.

On the Friday, the group went to Lily of the Valley orphanage for a quick tour, as it was an unsafe area to stay in, and they left more gifts. Both are Christian orphanages and have great facilities to help the children grow and have fun.

The team's second week largely consisted of helping with a Holiday Bible Club. Members helped prepare and set up the church for the four-day club.

Within the club, all had different roles, including helping with the different age groups and helping practically. They rotated around different stations, which included crafts, games, 'cooking' and bouncy castles. There was also time to spend telling stories in smaller groups, answering any questions that arose.

This gave team members the opportunity to be stretched and to share stories about Jesus with more than 120 children, with one teenager giving his life to Christ.

The team got to know the teens better through working alongside them at the club, the beach day and a residential.

Throughout the first week, the group had many opportunities to embrace the culture in South Africa. On the first Sunday, they joined church staff for a Braai, which is a South African barbecue. Some meals were provided by different members of the church family.

There was also the chance to experience local wildlife at the Phezulu Safari Park, where the All Saints' team saw crocodiles and snakes and experienced a traditional Zulu dance. At Tala Game Reserve, they saw giraffes, rhinos, zebras and more, and they also visited Ushaka Park.

This mission trip was grant-aided by Connor Mission Support Fund.



The All Saints', Belfast, team in South Africa. Rector, the Rev Trevor Johnston, is to the left of the picture.

## Introduction in Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan

The Rev Adrian Halligan was introduced as Curate-in-Charge of the Parishes of Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan at a service in Craigs Parish Church on September 12. Pictured at the service are, from left: Jackie Scott, June Davidson, Dean John Bond (preacher), Joyce McLoughlin, the Rev David Ferguson (Rural Dean), the Rev Adrian Halligan, the Ven Paul Dundas (Archdeacon of Dalriada), George Cinnamon, Alistair McCord and Frances Neilly. Adrian was previously curate in Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin in Broughshane, and prior to that was curate in All Saints', Antrim.





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