

CONNOR

connections

The Hub's
mission
in Uganda
pages 10-11



Best education a child can have



Matthew Owens, Director of Music at Belfast Cathedral.

Matthew Owens, who moved from Wells Cathedral to Belfast Cathedral as Director of Music in September, is no stranger to Northern Ireland as his wife, Ali, is originally from Whitehead.

His first experience of St Anne's was in 2003, when he brought the Lay Clerks of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh (where he was Organist and Master of the Music before moving to Wells), to sing at the cathedral for a weekend in February.

In the 18 years he has been coming to Northern Ireland to holiday with his wife (and latterly with their young children), Matthew has attended many Ulster Orchestra concerts. "I see a thirst for classical music, and that is something I hope to be able to capitalise on," he says.

Gesturing around the cathedral, he adds: "This is a wonderful building to be working in, and there is so much happening with the Ulster University development and other developments which will make the Cathedral Quarter even more exciting."

Matthew says he is developing ideas for choirs in the cathedral. "We are going to be one of the few cathedrals in the UK to have a children's choir that consists of boys and girls so the opportunities for both are equal," he said.

"It's going to be an exciting move. It will help consolidate the identity of the children's choir as they will all sing together as one unit."

Special recruitment events are planned, including the opportunity to 'Be a Chorister for a Day.' This is a free event for children who love music, with no previous experience necessary. The next 'Be a Chorister for a Day' is on November 9.

"They will enjoy fun music and singing games, learn new songs, and perform

them for family and friends," says Matthew.

"I have always said to parents that singing in a choir is the best education a child can have. The opportunities are amazing – a chance to sing in a building like this with acoustics like this, with one of the largest organs in Ireland, is fantastic.

"There are lots of other opportunities, such as broadcasting, concerts, tours and the education they get musically, vocally, and spiritually. As choristers they learn life skills like independence, teamwork, and commitment."

Matthew is also continuing to work on 'The Cranmer Anthem Book,' a project that will set all 92 Collects from the Book of Common Prayer to music.

This too will provide opportunities for the choir at the cathedral. "The choir will sing up to nine world premieres a year, and get to work with some internationally renowned composers," he reveals.

Looking ahead to 2020, other plans for music at Belfast Cathedral include developing lunchtime organ recitals and Christmas candlelight concerts.

Matthew will be supported by former Organ Scholar, Jack Wilson, who takes up the post of Assistant Director of Music in June, and current Organ Scholar, William Forrest. Organist Emeritus Ian Barber is also working with the music department.

Parents / guardians of any young person aged 7-14 interested in becoming a chorister at the cathedral should email Matthew at music@belfastcathedral.org.

MBE for scout leader Billy (81)

Billy Sholdis, 81-years-young and a parishioner of St Matthew's, Belfast, was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for his dedication to Scouts in the North West Belfast District.

Billy, who has lived all his life in the Shankill area, joined the scouts as a cub when he was eight, and, in his own words, 'never really left.' He is now assistant scout leader of 20th North and West Belfast Scouts.

"I went through the ranks, starting as a cub when I was eight, and when I finished I began to lead the cubs," Billy said.

The scouts meet in a hall in Bray Street. "We worked right through the Troubles, we never closed. We had a good set of leaders. The only thing we had to change was to tell the boys not to wear their uniform when going to the hall," Billy recalled.



Scout leader Billy Sholdis MBE.

Nowadays, Billy walks the short distance from his home off the Woodvale Road to the hall every morning. "I am what they used to call the unofficial caretaker," he said. He returns on Monday nights for scouts, on Tuesday nights for cubs and on Wednesday nights for beavers and squirrels.

Billy worked as a cobbler with Rogan Bros on the Shankill Road, before moving to the Belfast Corporation of Libraries. He was later a gardener in Woodvale Park before retirement.

He said the scouts were 'over the moon' at the news of his MBE. "I have been doing this for such a long time I never thought about anything like awards. My reward was organising activities for the kids in the district," he said.

Autumn 2019

Contents

Mission in Kitwe	4-5
Mossley Ramblers	6
Our first OLMs	7
Visit the Hundred Acre Wood!	9
Students on a mission	10-11
Mourne Mountain challenge	12
New hall for St Cedma's	13
Meet the Mwangi family	16
Looking back at Synod	17
St Polycarp's choir on tour	18
St Anne's now multilingual	19

Cover photo:

Young people from across the diocese had a great time at the annual Connor Takes the Castle youth weekend in September. Full story on page 14.



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

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For sake of diocese and my health I must retire

Dear friends, the last 12 months have been exhausting, and it has been difficult to focus on anything other than my treatment plan. I have received my last proton injection as part of the clinical trial and this stage of the journey is complete. I now need time to recover and regain my strength and energy.

Having advanced prostate cancer means that I will be receiving quarterly hormone injections for the rest of my life and will have very regular checkups with my oncologist. There are no guarantees, but it is hoped that I will be free of further treatment for years to come.

As a family, we are incredibly grateful for the amazing care and support we have received from the Cancer Centre at the Belfast City Hospital. We are also conscious that we have been carried by the love and prayers of so many people, especially the people of Connor Diocese. I cannot thank you all enough for your faithfulness and care in praying for me and my family.

My family have been amazing in love and support and they have also been carrying their own hopes and fears. We have also been very blessed by the peace and joy we have experienced, as Jesus has clearly journeyed with us on this strange and unwelcome journey. He has been with us, giving us hope and healing.

Over the last few months, I have had various conversations with my oncologist, my GP and my family. With a very heavy heart and spirit, it has become clear to me that for the sake of the diocese and my own long-term health, I should retire on health grounds.

My medical advice has been clear that I will not have the energy I used to have, and the ongoing treatment will affect my ability to fulfil the very demanding role as Bishop of Connor.

I have followed the process necessary, and it has been agreed that I can retire on health grounds. The Archbishop of Armagh has been supportive of this, and I have informed him that I will retire on December 31, giving the necessary three months' notice. This will also give me time to recover and to be able to plan a move to our new home.

I am conscious that yet again the responsibility for the diocese falls to the three archdeacons and I am very grateful



Bishop Alan Abernethy.

for their willingness to serve the diocese in this way.

At this stage, my aim is to be in St Anne's Cathedral on Christmas Eve and in Lisburn Cathedral on Christmas Day. This will allow me to fulfil my ministry as bishop once more before I retire.

My plans have to be finalised, but suffice to say it has been an amazing privilege and joy to have served you as bishop.

Be assured of my continued prayers for you all.

Grace and peace,

+ Alan Connor

Thanksgiving Service

A diocesan Service of Thanksgiving to mark the retirement of the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy as Bishop of Connor will be held in St Patrick's Church, Ballymena, on December 19.

Admission to the service will be by invitation only, and each parish in the diocese will be allocated a number of invites. The service will begin at 7.30pm.



Forming relationships in Kitwe are, from left: Archdeacon Richard, Bishop Trevor Williams, the Rev Hazel Minion, Father Denis, pastor at St Peter's Church, the Rev Aaron McAlister, Noreen Hurst, MU, and Keith Scott, CMSI.

Aaron finds Kitwe is a beautiful contradiction

The Rev Aaron McAlister, rector of Derriaghy, was part of a small CMS Ireland team which visited Kitwe in Zambia in July.

The team was looking at the work of ordinands and the seminary in the CMS compound in Kitwe. With Aaron were retired bishop, Trevor Williams; the Rev Hazel Minion from Co Cork; and Noreen Hurst from Antrim Parish, where Aaron was curate until September this year. Noreen is Connor Mothers' Union Worldwide representative.

All Saints' Parish, Antrim, has an established link with Kitwe Diocese, and a personal link through CMSI mission partners Keith and Lyn Scott.

The seminary teaches ordinands to go out into Kitwe and larger, more rural areas. Aaron, Hazel and Bishop Trevor delivered seminars on topics close to their hearts – Trevor, who has close links with the Corrymeela Community, spoke on peace and reconciliation; Hazel on becoming a woman priest – something Zambia is moving towards – and Aaron, who has cerebral palsy, spoke about ministry to people who are sick or disabled.

After a rest following an arduous journey to Kitwe, work began with a frank discussion with the ordinands. "We were quizzed about the nature of our evangelism. Whilst we endeavoured to sum up the issues facing the people of our countries, in the end it came down to 'if your country is so much smaller than Zambia and you have many ministers, why aren't you

evangelising more?'" Aaron said.

In Buchi, a local parish, the team met parishioners, the Mothers' Union and Father Alfred. "They said we blessed them, but upon reflection we were blessed by their hospitality," said Aaron.

"The best part of my day wasn't the honesty of discussion or meeting such wonderful and humble people. It came when we were about to have tea with Father Alfred. A lady came into the little study room with a jug, a basin and a towel, and proceeded to wash our hands with cold water and then, with the towel over her arm, we dried our hands.

"That for me was the literal presence of Christ. Such a simple gesture, but one with profound meaning."

BLESSED

Another poignant moment for Aaron was meeting a little girl in the street. "When she saw me, she said 'how are you sir?' I don't remember the last time I was asked that by a stranger, let alone a child," he said. "Every single day we were blessed, honoured, in small, seemingly insignificant ways."

On the Sunday of their visit, the team all had early starts. Trevor preached in two churches, with one service lasting three hours, Hazel preached at two services, and



St Peter's Church, built from bricks formed from clay from a nearby anthill.

was accompanied by Noreen.

Aaron had just one service. "It was surreal," he said. "In what would seem to the European mind and eye to be an impoverished area stood a church, beckoning people to worship and praise God. And they did. I didn't need to understand the language to understand the sense of joy they had, the appreciation of their God."

Aaron preached and was also asked to bless the unconfirmed after everyone else had been served their communion. "One little girl, three or four-years-old, went up to the communion rail along with her older sister. I said the Blessing, but the most remarkable thing about this interaction was that she closed her eyes and bowed her head. It was in the bowing of her little head that nearly filled me with tears," he recalled.

Speaking of the theological teaching at the seminary, Aaron said: "It is interesting to see how people from different cultures read the same text and understand it in a way that is unique to their context."

DISABILITY

Leading the discussion on disability, he said: "I wanted to hear from the ordinands their experiences of disabled people in their towns, and discover what attitudes people hold towards people of different or limited abilities, and, most importantly, what the Bible says to them about this subject as they read the relevant passages.

"It was a very stimulating discussion. What it reinforced in me is that issues are the same the world over, only the culture changes. And as I engaged with the students on this topic, I could see intellect and faith coming together and not naive or simple beliefs."

The team took a trip to Chingola, a small rural community, where they found Father Douglas running a course on early childhood development for around 30 people, many of them elderly men. They then travelled on to Mutenda and St Peter's Church.

"Each brick was formed of clay from the anthill that grew beside the church," Aaron said. "As Noreen reflected, imagine



The team calls into the Early Childhood Development course run by Father Douglas in the rural village of Chingola.



Aaron photographed this schoolboy who is working as an apprentice thatcher to pay for his own education.

something so tiny being instrumental in creating something so much more.

"Beside the church was a little bush, and in full bloom under the hot sun was the frangipani flower. Its petals were almost reaching towards the sun. It made me think of the people, who, in the middle of this arid landscape, were reaching out for life, like a flower in a desert - a contrast to the harshness of the unforgiving land by being a people full of hopes and dreams, loves and fears, who, no matter what comes, cannot be defeated by the harsh environment."

The team visited Limapela School where more than 400 children receive primary and post-primary education. "The director explained they wanted to build a school where the students felt proud to learn," Aaron said.

As their visit neared an end, the team

returned to Chingola to meet Archdeacon Richard who took them to the Kafue River.

"The river was picturesque until we saw a pipe right next to rapids. The pipe on occasion spews out acid that comes from the copper mines, destroying all life in the river," Aaron observed.

HUMBLING

In Hippopo village the team was met with smiles and songs from the village choir, but Aaron said the abject poverty was inescapable. "It was humbling to think that, in the hardest parts of the world where clean water is a scarcity and basic everyday things we take for granted are not hungered after, these people find that lifting their voices raises their spirits."

Summing up the trip, Aaron said: "Kitwe and the surrounding townships are a beautiful contradiction. It is a culture stretching out into the world looking to



Happy smiles from local children.

have all the same rights and privileges that we enjoy, while being firmly locked in a country of a failing economy and very few rights.

"It is beautiful in its people, but frightening in its harshness in terms of what is accessible, and the state the country is in, both sociologically and ecologically. And right at the heart of this disparity are the voices that continue to praise God despite all the harshness. They constantly praise God. What lessons might we all learn from that, I wonder?"

Reflecting on her experience, Noreen said: "There are many challenges and problems for the people who live in this tough environment, both rural and urban, which they are tackling where possible. I saw the positives and the negatives, the problems and the successes. Most importantly, I met the people, listened, shared stories and mutual respect.

"This trip to Zambia, for me, was a dream come true. I felt both privileged and humbled to have spent two weeks in this beautiful country, meeting with Mothers' Union members, families, clergy and students."

30th anniversary celebrated

The Rev Clifford Skillen marked the 30th anniversary of his ordination at a celebration of Choral Eucharist in St Polycarp's, Finaghy, on June 16.

Clifford has been curate of Bangor Abbey; rector of Upper and Lower Kilwarlin; and was rector of Finaghy from 1996-2009.

After his retirement from Finaghy, he served for two years in Derriaghly as assistant priest with the Rev Canon John Budd who preached at the 30th anniversary service.

Clifford is senior domestic chaplain to the Bishop of Connor, and was assistant editor of The Church of Ireland Gazette from 1999-2015.

He served for four years as secretary of the Retired Clergy Association (NI) and is currently endeavouring to keep up-to-date the Connor Succession Lists of Clergy since 1992, building on the groundwork done by the late Canon Edgar Turner.



The Rev Clifford Skillen (centre) with the Rev Canon John Budd and the Rev Louise Stewart, rector of Finaghy and Upper Malone.

Stranmillis Parish buries time capsule

As part of Stranmillis Parish's centenary celebrations, a time capsule was buried by the children in the grounds of the church on St Bartholomew's Day.

The burying of the time capsule was part of a fun-filled afternoon to mark St Bartholomew's Day - the Saturday of the late August Bank Holiday weekend.

The plan is that the capsule will not be re-opened until St Bartholomew's Day, August 24 2044. It contains photos of the Sunday School and Tots' Church and other artefacts, as well as messages written by the children to themselves to be read in 25 years' time.

The fun day took place in the rectory and grounds of St Bartholomew's, with children's activities including a bouncy castle, balloon modelling and games. There was cake and coffee, and everyone enjoyed the barbecue and candy floss.



Mossley Parish Ramblers in St Thomas' Church, Rathlin Island, during their visit last June.

Ramblers stride out!

A rambling club established in Mossley Parish by the Rev Canon Neil Cutcliffe in 1986 continues to go from strength to strength.

Neil, a former rector, loves rambling, and was soon encouraging parishioners to head out for walks on Saturdays. This initial group of 'volunteers' included Wesley Smyth, Norman Templeton, Clifford Holmes, Stuart Flint, Brian Davidson and Mark Campbell. And with them, Mossley Parish Ramblers were born!

As the years passed, many more parishioners have joined the Ramblers, taking part in walks all over Northern Ireland. Their rambles have also taken them to Scotland, the Lake District, the Republic of Ireland, and there were even three trips to the battlefields of Northern France and Belgium. On one such trip, Mossley Ramblers' members participated in the laying of a wreath at the Menin Gate in Ypres.

Mossley Parish Ramblers have also been

involved in many fundraising events on behalf of the parish and different charities. Members have, for example, completed the Jogle (walking from John O'Groats to Lands End), undertaken the Four Peaks Challenge, staged a First World War Exhibition, and held 'On Yer Bike,' which was a exercise bike-based fundraiser.

One of the annual highlights for the Ramblers is a trip to Rathlin Island in June. This outing regularly attracts up to 40 people, but this year a new record of 46 took part.

More than 30 years since it first began, Mossley Parish Ramblers continue to grow and develop. Clifford Holmes, a founding member, still organises regular walks, and the parish is thankful to him for his dedication, enthusiasm and leadership.

Crumlin MU celebrates 60th anniversary

St John's Mothers' Union, Crumlin, celebrated its 60th anniversary on September 8. The guest speaker was the Most Rev Pat Storey, Bishop of Meath and Kildare. Bishop Pat and her husband, the Rev Earl Storey, had been rector and team vicar in the parish from 1998-2003.

The bishop used John's Gospel reading (Chapter 6; verses 66-69) to encourage members, and, at a time when MU branches face many challenges, her words received a large round of applause, instigated by the Rev John Farr, who led the worship.

Connor Diocesan President, Sally Cotter, and Area Chair, Irene Paget, read the lessons. Past diocesan presidents were in attendance, along with branch members

from St Jude's, Muckamore; Craig's, Killagan and Dunaghy; Killead and Gartree and St Patrick's, Broughshane.

The service was followed by a buffet in the church hall, with tea and anniversary cake. The cake was cut by longest serving members, Dorothy Courtney and Norma Lindsay.



Celebrating 60 years of Mothers' Union in Crumlin.

First OLMs ordained in Connor Diocese

The ordination of Connor's first Ordained Local Ministers (OLMs) by the Rt Rev Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry, took place in Lisburn Cathedral on September 22.

Adrian Bell was ordained for the parishes of St Andrew, Glencairn, and Whiterock, Belfast; Louise Bowes for Mossley; and Anne Locke for Whitehouse and St Ninian, Belfast. The preacher was the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

An ordained local minister is not an incumbent of a parish but is someone who can exercise some leadership role within a local congregation.

Adrian, who is married to Janet, has worshipped in St Aidan's, Glenavy, since childhood. He has worked in the joinery business, and also the catering industry. He was licensed as a diocesan lay reader in 2016, and served his probationary year as reader in Glencairn and Whiterock. The following year, the parishes became vacant and as Adrian was semi-retired, he was able to take a more active day-to-day role.

"Obviously as a lay reader there are things I can't do, such as Holy Communion services and baptisms, so this led me to explore the Ordained Local Ministry. It seemed an ideal fit for my circumstances," Adrian said.

"I now look forward to continuing my

training and ministry after ordination. I love working in these parishes and have appreciated the prayerful support of both congregations. I'm also very grateful for the ongoing support and guidance of the clergy and Church Army in Mid-Belfast rural deanery."

Louise, who is married to Alan, was formerly a parishioner of St Brigid's, Mallusk, and following a Lenten Bible study based on John Ortberg's book, 'If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat,' she felt God's call.

"I knew as I stepped out in faith that while I had potential, I would be taken outside of my comfort zone," Louise admitted.

She was already engaged with youth ministry and an alternative Sunday service, and was commissioned as a diocesan lay reader in 2011. This was followed by a year's placement in the Church of the Holy Spirit, Mossley. "On completion of this, I strongly felt God's desire for me, and my family, to remain here," Louise said.

Louise has been a Street Pastor in Antrim and Newtownabbey since 2013, and was appointed as the Northern Ireland representative on the National Committee

of World Day of Prayer in September 2015.

She said she was encouraged by her rector to apply for Ordained Local Ministry. "I am very much looking forward to engaging in ministry in Mossley Parish. I will have a particular focus on the pastoral care of housebound parishioners and those currently residing in nursing homes and folds," Louise said.

"Additionally, I will be supporting the rector in engaging with the local community and developing new missional approaches in the wider Mossley area."

Anne and her husband Arthur have been married for 38 years and have two children. Anne has a Diploma in Information Technology, and took an Access Course and Foundation Award at Belfast Bible College after her commissioning as a parish reader in 2013.

She works part-time with Disability Action, a rights-based voluntary organisation. "I work within the employment and training unit, which provides a range of supports to young disabled people in training and to adults with disabilities who wish to secure paid employment or are already in employment," Anne said.

"As an OLM, I am able to fulfil my calling to ordained ministry, whilst remaining in my home parish, a calling first recognised in me by others long before I recognised it for myself. I will be ministering amongst people who have loved, nurtured and encouraged me over the years, and where I will continue to assist with services, pastoral visiting and other aspects of parish life."



At the ordination of the first Ordained Local Ministers in Connor Diocese on September 22 are, front, from left: OLMs Louise Bowes, Adrian Bell and Anne Locke. Back, from left: The Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; the Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain; the Ven George Davison, Bishop of Connor's Commissary; the Rt Rev Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry; the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor; and the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Diocesan Director of Ordinands, and the Ven Paul Dundas, Archdeacon of Dalriada.

Ballyclug Christmas tree celebration!

To celebrate its 175th anniversary, Ballyclug Parish Church is holding a Christmas Tree Festival from November 28 until December 1.

The church will be open daily during this period, and an official opening ceremony by the Rev Canon Ken Ruddock and Deputy Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Beth Adger MBE, will take place at 2pm on November 28.

Light refreshments will be available, with a special menu for groups of 10 or more - please contact Vera at 07515 396369.

Coach parties and larger groups must book in advance by contacting Jackie Greer on 07710 618196 or by email at william.greer0404@gmail.com.

Charity searches for cure for kids like Alex

Starting primary school is a big step for most children, but that first school day in September was an especially huge leap for Alex Marks, whose daily life is impacted by Mitochondrial Disease (Mito).

Alex, son of Duneane parishioners Hazel and James Marks, began taking seizures at the age of six months. Tests revealed little Alex, who will be five in December, had a host of health issues. A year-and-a-half later, Hazel and James learned he has Mito, an illness for which there is no cure.

The term Mitochondrial Disease refers to a number of diseases caused by faulty Mitochondria. Alex currently suffers from a range of issues, including epilepsy, developmental delay, left ventricular hypertrophy, and joint hypermobility. This is because his Mitochondria don't store or produce energy correctly, and without the right amount of energy, Alex's cells stop performing.

"Mito affects everyone differently," said Hazel. "It often goes undiagnosed, and can cause a lot of deaths because it affects the vital organs. No two people are affected the same. Alex's body is immunocompromised, and his body



Alex Marks visiting the Winnie the Pooh exhibition. struggles to fight infection."

At present, Alex is stable. Because there is no specialist service in Northern Ireland, he visits his consultant in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne once a year, with twice yearly Skype consultations. His heart, eyes, ears and other organs and faculties have to be

monitored for signs of deterioration.

Last year, Alex learned to walk independently. He can get around using a K Walker, although he still needs a wheelchair outside the home. He had one-to-one assistance at pre-school, and Hazel said his speech had really come on.

"The prognosis is not good, but so far Alex is doing much better than expected," she said.

The family is supported by The Lily Foundation, a charity which not only helps those affected by the disease, but conducts research to find a cure. Hazel, James and their family and friends have been raising funds for The Lily Foundation, and were touched when their vicar told them some of the proceeds from his Winnie the Pooh exhibition would be donated to the charity.

"Alex is a charismatic, happy little boy," Hazel said. "He brings a lot of joy to those around him and he has huge determination to enjoy life to the full. We don't know what lies ahead for us, but what we do know is we need to help to find a cure.

"We were delighted when Derek said he would be supporting The Lily Foundation. Alex really enjoyed the exhibition. Our thanks to people, like Derek, for fundraising and raising awareness in the hope that one day a cure will be found for Alex."

Tough start to life for twins Eva and Gracie

When twins Eva and Gracie were born three months early, Eva weighed just 1lb 11ozs and Gracie was 2lbs 4ozs.

Now aged 20 months, the girls are thriving, but they had a difficult start to life. Gracie

had to stay in hospital for two months after birth, and Eva, because she needed surgery for a bowel infection, was in hospital for eight months.

Throughout that tough time, the twins and

their parents, Robert and Claire Melville, were supported by the charity Tiny Life. And when the Rev Canon Derek Kerr was debating which charities his Winnie the Pooh exhibition might be able to support, he thought of Tiny Life.

Eva and Gracie are identical twins, although Eva is a little bit smaller than her sister. "We can't take our eyes off them now," says mum Claire. "I am nearly dreading when they start to walk!"

"Tiny Life gave us a lot of support. They offered counselling in the hospital, and physio when they were discharged. The girls also went to the 'Tiny Gym' once a week and we learned routines to do at home. They have now progressed to a baby and toddler group run by Tiny Life.

"It was so good of Derek to think of raising funds for Tiny Life. I could not believe that his Winnie the Pooh collection would fill a whole church hall! We brought the girls along and they were able to play with some of the toys. It was very nice of Derek as Tiny Life relies on fundraising."



Twins Eva and Gracie Melville were born three months early, and the family has been supported by the charity Tiny Life, which benefited from funds raised at the Rev Canon Derek Kerr's Winnie the Pooh exhibition.



The Rev Canon Derek Kerr with a small section of his Winnie the Pooh collection at the exhibition in Drummaul.

Derek turns a hobby into a fun fundraiser

Drummaul Church Hall was transformed into the Hundred Acre Wood in June, as the Rev Canon Derek Kerr released his Winnie the Pooh collection from the vicarage and presented it to an unsuspecting public.

For three days, the walls of the church hall were literally lined with hundreds of Poohs, Piglets, Tiggers, Eeyores and others from the cast of AA Milne's most famous books. In the middle of the floor was a mini Hundred Acre Wood.

The cuddly toys, mugs, ornaments, pictures, bedroom furniture and more all belong to Derek, rector of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion. Derek traces this obsession (though he doesn't call it that!) back to his days at Oakhill Theological College, when his friend Simon Everett, now Rural Dean of Wareham in Dorset, would 'go on' about Winnie the Pooh.

"I said 'Simon, you turned 30 last year, you just got engaged, is it not time to put Winnie the Pooh to one side?'" Derek explained. "In response, he bought me 'The House on Pooh Corner.' I found myself sitting on my bed reading it."

The Pooh bear love affair may have begun in the late 1980s, but it blossomed when Derek was curate at Holy Trinity Parish, Woodburn, many years later. "Four years in a row, a friend bought me a giant character from Winnie the Pooh. Winnie, Eeyore, Piglet and Tiger currently reside in my bath," he said.

"Then, for a badge, the church GB decorated my bedroom from floor to ceiling with Winnie the Pooh characters while I was on holiday, and I loved it. Unfortunately I could not take it with me. When I was leaving the house, the people moving in must have thought there had been children living there – not just a 27-year-old bachelor!"

Derek's passion continued, as over the years he picked up Pooh characters and memorabilia, including mugs, tea pots, snow globes, duvet covers and more, in charity shops, spending just a few pounds on each item.



A table full of Eeyores in Drummaul Parish Hall.

"I had the idea of putting all this stuff out in an exhibition and turning what was a daft hobby into something that children would enjoy and which would raise money for charity," Derek said.

And so he did...

Looking at the collection, it beggars belief that it fits into the vicarage. "They are mostly stored in one bedroom, but were beginning to spill out the door," said Derek. "Even I was getting embarrassed."

"Some time ago, the vicarage was burgled. A stereo was stolen and on it was my Winnie the Pooh record. The police officer who was investigating told me not to worry, he wouldn't tell anyone about my collection. The next week in church, three police officers came up to tease me," Derek joked.



Tiggers, Tiggers everywhere!

As the main attraction in the June exhibition, Winnie the Pooh himself appeared in many guises - dressed as a bee, in his pyjamas, as a leprechaun, and a pirate - the list goes on.

A total of £1,300 was raised through both the exhibition and a town festival church service held the same weekend, and cheques have been presented to three charities - Tiny Life, The Lily Foundation and Fields of Life.

Derek chose all three for specific reasons. "We have supported Fields of Life for many years," he said. "Just before I came here, this parish had raised £45,000 for Tiberio School in Uganda, and that fantastic link continues through sponsorship of children."

Tiny Life is a charity which has made a big difference in the lives of twins Eva and Gracie, whose family belong to the parish, and the Lily Foundation supports people with Mitochondrial Disease, including parishioner Alex Marks, aged four.

Institution of Rev Dennis Christie

A service of institution of the Rev Dennis Christie as rector of the Grouped Parishes of Ahoghill and Portglenone took place in St Colmanell's, Ahoghill, on June 26.

The preacher was the Rev Canon Mark McConnell, rector of Ballymena (Kilconriola) and Ballyclug, and Dennis was instituted rector by the Bishop of Connor's Commissary, Archdeacon George Davison.

Dennis, 43, is married to Jennifer and they have three children. He was previously curate of Ballymena Parish. He has a BEng

in Architectural Engineering from Queen's University; an MSc in Transport from Imperial College, London; a Prof Cert in Ministry from the University of Chester and he graduated with a MTh in Theology from Trinity College, Dublin, in 2016.

Prior to his training for ordination, Dennis worked as a transport planning consultant for 15 years. He did his deacon intern year (2015-16) at Muckamore, Killead and Gartree Parish, and was ordained a priest in Connor Diocese in September 2016.



At the institution service in Ahoghill on June 26 are, from left: Archdeacon Paul Dundas; the Rev Dennis Christie; Bishop's Commissary, Archdeacon George Davison; Registrar, the Rev Canon William Taggart; Rural Dean, the Rev David Ferguson and the preacher, the Rev Canon Mark McConnell. Photo: Ballymena Guardian.

Institution of Rev Nigel Kirkpatrick

The Rev Nigel Kirkpatrick was instituted as rector of the Grouped Parishes of Kilroot and Templecorran at a service in St Colman's Parish Church, Carrickfergus, on September 4.

Nigel, 50, is married to Cristina. He was previously rector of St Dorothea's Parish, Gilnahirk, Diocese of Down and Dromore.

He was a volunteer with the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe and was later an intern to the World Council of Churches (WCC) Youth Department. Nigel is a founder member of the Solas Community of Reconciliation, based on the 'peaceline' in north Belfast.

In 1996 Nigel was ordained for St Columba's, Portadown, where he was a curate for three years, before taking a second curacy with the Lecale Group which included Down Cathedral.

In 2001 he was appointed rector of

Killinchy and Kilmood Union of Parishes, moving to St Dorothea's in 2007. He is a Minor Canon of Belfast Cathedral.

Nigel was instituted rector of Kilroot and Templecorran by the Bishop of Connor's Commissary, the Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Belfast.



Pictured at the institution of the Rev Nigel Kirkpatrick in Kilroot and Templecorran are Councillor Maureen Morrow, Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council; the Rev Nigel Kirkpatrick; and Bishop's Commissary, the Ven George Davison.

God at work



A team from The Hub Chaplaincy, Queen's U, start of the summer holidays to work with c... real difference in people's lives. Team leader

On May 31, a team of 22 people from The Hub headed out on mission to work in Uganda with Abaana and Wakisa, two charities that The Hub has been supporting for more than five years.

The team was made up of The Hub staff members, members of the Church of the Resurrection, and students from universities in Belfast.

After a day of orientation with Abaana, the team was divided into two, with one half going east of Kampala to South Mukono to work in an Abaana school, and the other heading south towards Entebbe to spend



k in Uganda



The team leads singing and dancing at Kira Primary School, a school which is associated with Abaana.

University Belfast, headed to Uganda at the charities Abaana and Wakisa and make a **James Turner** looks back on the visit.

the week with Wakisa Ministries.

The first team worked in the Matthew Cardwell Primary School. There they spent time with the children, playing games, making crafts, teaching them worship songs and Scripture through dramatised stories and memory verses.

In the afternoons, the team constructed a new latrine block which they almost managed to complete in the short time they were there. The time spent at the Matthew Cardwell School was very special. The staff displayed incredible faith and were an inspiration to the team.

The highlight of their stay was the opportunity to pray for every individual on their last day there, including pupils, staff members, and the builders on site.

The team at Wakisa also had an amazing experience. They spent time with the ladies there, teaching them Scripture, running Bible studies, praise nights, dance classes and looking after the infants in the nursery. The team loved being able to see how God was so evidently and powerfully working in each of the lives of the young women within the Wakisa Centre.

The highlight of the week was being able to join in praise nights, at which the women taught The Hub team new songs, and the team also taught the women new songs.

Once the two teams had finished their



The Hub Chaplaincy team building a latrine.

projects, they came back together at Abaana for the final 10 days. Sadly, a planned Streetreach project was unable to go ahead due to a change in government laws, but the team saw God leading and guiding as they got to spend three days in a juvenile remand centre in the middle of Kampala.

There the team ministered amongst the young people within the centre, through worship, teaching and prayer. Seeing 25 young men come forward to commit their lives to Jesus was a real highlight.

The team also spent time in and out of several other schools where they ministered among children and staff alike, worshipping with them, teaching them and praying for them. Needless to say that it was a busy three weeks, but a time in which each of the team saw God work and move powerfully.

- [Wakisa Ministries \(www.wakisaministries.com\)](http://www.wakisaministries.com) provides support to girls and their families facing unwanted pregnancies.
- [Based in Bangor, Abaana \(www.abaana.org\)](http://www.abaana.org), invests in children in Africa, helping them to break the chains of poverty, through education.



The Hub Chaplaincy Uganda team.



Meeting the babies at Wakisa Ministries.

Dedications at St Saviour's, Connor

A stained glass window and a new memorial seat have been dedicated in St Saviour's Parish, Connor.

The window, in memory of the Rev A Sydney Hofmeester, was dedicated on June 23 at the annual Thanksgiving Service for the Ulster Defence Regiment CGC and the Royal Irish Regiment.

The new stained glass window was presented by The Colours and Window Committee of The Regimental Association, and was dedicated by the rector, the Rev Ian Magowan, and unveiled by The Lord Lieutenant of Co Antrim, Mrs Joan Christie CVO, OBE.

The window depicts scenes relevant to Mr Hofmeester's early life. Originally from South Africa, he was rector of St Saviour's from 1962-1984. The late Major Charlie McCartney was the instigator of this new window being installed as a tribute to Mr Hofmeester, who was instrumental in bringing the Ulster Defence Regiment into St Saviour's in the 1970s.

In a separate dedication service on July 28, the Simmons family were present for the dedication of a new outdoor seat in memory of their parents, the Rev David Simmons, who was rector of the parish from 1951 until 1961, and his wife, Hester Eileen.

Towards the end of the service, the rector, the family and the congregation moved outside where the seat was dedicated by Mr Magowan.



The Rev Ian Magowan and Mrs Joan Christie dedicate the window in memory of the Rev A Sydney Hofmeester in St Saviour's, Connor.

Immanuel Parish gift to Air Ambulance

Immanuel Parish Church, Ardoyne, has presented a cheque for £900 to Grace Williams from Air Ambulance NI.

The money was donated at the church's All Age Services during 2018/2019.



The successful Seven Sevens' challengers: David Green, the Rev Stuart Lloyd, William McCandless, Alistair Taylor and James McDowell.

Team's Seven Sevens Mourne challenge

A team of hikers from St Patrick's Parish, Coleraine, completed the Seven Sevens challenge in the Mourne Mountains on June 22, raising £3,686 for The Alzheimer's Society.

The group walked 18 miles and climbed seven of the highest peaks in a trek which took 15 and a half hours.

They set out from Donard Park in Newcastle at 7am, walking through forest and along the stone pathway to the saddle between Slieve Donard and Slieve Commedagh.

Team member James McDowell said: "With cloud blowing in through the mountains from the south east, visibility was poor on the highest peak of Slieve Donard. As we climbed the steep incline, the challenge can be in the mind and it's a victory when behind you."

The sun appeared as the hikers tackled Slieve Beg, Cove Mountain and Slieve Lamagan, before taking on Slieve Binnian. "The dramatic tors on Binnian have names like the Black Castles, and the views are stunning, with the Silent Valley and Ben Crom Reservoirs stretching far below," James said.

The team descended to Ben Crom dam to meet support team members, Diane, Patricia and Neill, who provided food and water. After a rest, they crossed the dam and climbed the shoulder of Ben Crom, leading into a 2.5k walk through rough grassland and bog, passing Doan, and onto a hardcore track.



The walkers swamped in mist on the trail.

Then it was up Slieve Meelbeg, Meelmore and finally Bernagh. "Our pace was slow and steady, with the group frequently resting for a few minutes and being careful to rehydrate," James said. "The downward treks were as challenging as the upward, with the pressure on aching knees. The final climb to the summit of Bernagh was over rock and scree as we picked our way up, and the relief felt at the final ascent was palpable."

The group descended to Hare's Gap and finally a 7k trek along the Brandy Pad, with the challenge ending where it had begun, in Donard Park.

"Neil, Diane and Patricia were waiting for us as we came out of the forest at 10.30pm, tired but with a sense that we had accomplished our goal, overcoming our misgivings and self-doubt," said James.

A dream comes true

They dared to dream, and that dream was realised as the parishioners of St Cedma's, Larne, dedicated their new parish hall on September 19.

The opening of the striking Inver Hall, next to the church, marked many years of planning, negotiations, the buying and selling of property and a huge amount of fundraising.

Anne Marcus, honorary secretary, said: "Fifteen years ago it became clear that the existing parochial hall was quite literally beginning to show cracks, and this coincided with the generous bequest from the Higginson family of Inver of their home property to the parish.

"This allowed us the luxury to take an overview of all our building stock and make plans for the future. Under the leadership of the then rector, the Rev Stephen Forde, now Dean of Belfast, the vestry embarked on the process of deciding whether to refurbish the existing hall, to build a new hall on that site, which was at some distance from the church, or to dare to dream to build a new hall adjacent to the church. We dared!" Anne said.

It took nearly 10 years to acquire the land from Larne Borough Council. Fundraising had commenced and plans had been drawn up, so once the land was in place, the parish was ready to begin work.

Anne said: "Deciding things by committee is never easy but the select vestry worked well together, respecting each other's views. The schemes to raise funds were innovative and imaginative –

definitely testament that you don't know what you can do until you try!"

Building work got under way in July 2018, and parishioner Ronnie Lee volunteered to project manage from the church's side, and liaise with the builder and architect.

The official opening followed a service in St Cedma's, at which the preacher was Dean Forde.

The building was dedicated by the Bishop of Connor's Commissary,

Archdeacon George Davison, who cut the ribbon assisted by Dean Forde and the present rector of Larne and Inver, the Rev David Lockhart.

Anne Marcus told the gathering: "People have been worshipping on this holy site for more than 1,000 years and we are the people who have been entrusted with its care and development at this time. We are proclaiming our commitment to God in this place."

Archdeacon Davison said it had been a privilege to be part of a 'wonderful, inspiring' evening. "I want to thank you on behalf of the diocese, because things like this lift people's spirits. When people read about this, they may take inspiration from the people of Larne," he said.



Dean Stephen Forde, former rector; Archdeacon George Davison, Bishop's Commissary; and the Rev David Lockhart, rector, officially open the new Inver Hall at St Cedma's, Larne.

Institution of Rev Aaron McAlister in Derriaghy

The Rev Aaron McAlister was instituted rector of Derriaghy at a service in Christ Church Parish Church on Thursday September 26.

The former curate of Antrim Parish was instituted by the Bishop of Connor's Commissary, Archdeacon George Davison. The preacher was the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, Archdeacon of Connor.

Aaron is married to Melanie and they have two children, Jacob and Ellie. He worked for 20 years in the DVLA in motor taxation, and was commissioned as a diocesan lay reader in December 2007. He gained a professional certificate in ministry in 2012 from the University of Chester before completing two years of training at the Theological Institute in Dublin. Aaron was



The Rev Aaron McAlister was instituted as rector of Derriaghy on September 26, with Archdeacon George Davison, the Bishop of Connor's Commissary.

ordained a deacon in 2015.

During training, he did placements in Christ Church, Castlerock, and St Paul's, Dunboe (Articlave); Desertoghill (Moyletragh) and St

Paul's, Garvagh (Errigal).

Aaron also did a one-month placement with Bishop Justin Badi Arama, Diocese of Maridi, South Sudan. He worked for a year with the United Parishes of Billy and Derrykeighan as a year out from the Theological Institute. His third year intern placement was as deacon at Holy Trinity, Portrush (Ballywillan).

Following ordination, Aaron served as curate assistant in All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim.

He said he was looking forward 'with excitement and anticipation' to the next chapter as rector of Christ Church, Derriaghy, and St Andrew's, Colin, and to discovering how he is to serve God and the parish.

Connor Takes the Castle!



More young people than ever signed up for Connor Takes the Castle 2019!

Connor Youth saw a bumper attendance of 114 young people and leaders for the annual diocesan residential in Castlewellan from September 5-7

Groups came from All Saints', Antrim; Ballyrashane and Killdollah; Broughshane; St Nicholas', Carrickfergus; St Patrick's, Jordanstown; Lambeg; Lisburn Cathedral; St Michael's; St Stephen and St Luke's; and St Brigid's.

Sessions were excellently led by The Big House, helping the young people discover who God is and how to cope during the storms of life. Worship was led by Catherine Forde and Daniel McDonald from The Hub Chaplaincy.

Outdoor activities were hosted by Salt Factory Sports and Soft Arrow Combat, with some of the clergy jumping in to shoot an arrow or two! 'Connor's Got Talent' was, as always, a highlight!

Connor Youth Council expressed thanks to all the youth leaders for bringing their groups and supporting this diocesan event.

Festival fever at Summer Madness!



The Connor Summer Madness BBQ.

It was another sunny Summer Madness, with the number of campers sharing hospitality at Connor sub camp continuing to grow.

Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "It was a great encouragement to have 17 parishes represented, as well as other diocesan guests attending for our barbecue. There was a marked increase for meals, with at least 50 more people eating with us each day than in 2018."

Another highlight was Connor Youth Forum sharing their 'Journey' resource with a packed-out seminar venue. They encouraged those attending to consider how they could use their story to share faith with others, and explained the 'journey of Journey!'

Christina said: "A huge thank you to Mark Taylor, David Lockhart, Beverley and Naomi, Philip Benson, Carolyn and Hannah – who were an incredible team, providing the hospitality for our groups at the festival."

Looking forward to a 'Big Weekend!'

Lisburn Cathedral Chapter is working in partnership with Connor Youth and Children's Development Officers, Christina Baillie and Jill Hamilton, to host a weekend of events for children, youth, and children's and youth leaders.

Connor's Big Weekend will take place on November 16 and 17 in St Patrick's Parish, Ballymena. Lisburn Cathedral Chapter and the Church of Ireland Orphans and Children's Society are jointly funding the project.

The Big Family Fiesta takes place on the

Saturday with a Children's Praise Concert featuring drama, storytelling and worship, along with a café and workshop. This event is for children, and is also suitable for leaders and children's groups.

The following day takes the form of Sunday Snapshot, with a practical training session for children's and youth leaders led by Bob Hartman, Inspire, Play It by Ear, Catherine Little and Stu Bothwell.

Book for both events through the Connor website www.connor.anglican.org/children-youth/.

American team shares friendship and faith



Connor young people with their visitors from Christ in Youth, USA.

For the third year, Connor's young people had a Christ In Youth team from America join them for two weeks in the summer.

The team of 18 young people and leaders camped at Summer Madness, serving as event crew at the festival, and then became team members at Connor

Streetreach in Mossley Parish.

Connor Youth Officer Christina Baillie said: "It was fantastic to have two individuals returning from last year's team, and it has been a great encouragement to our young people to develop friendships and share in their faith."

'A wonderful time in the life of our parish'

The Rev Peter Jones, rector of Mossley, reflects on the impact of Streetreach 2019

After much planning, preparing and praying, we were delighted to welcome Streetreach to Mossley between Tuesday July 2 and Friday July 5.

Around 50 young people from Connor and parts of the USA met up in the parish centre after spending time together at Summer Madness in Glenarm Castle.

Tuesday evening was an opportunity for the young people to get to know each other and some members of Mossley Parish. Board games were played, and our American guests were especially interested in how the USA women's football team would fare in their World Cup game against England!

Shortly after 9.30pm, everyone met in the church for a debrief session (something which occurred on a nightly basis during Streetreach). On this opening night, various hopes and aspirations were discussed, and time was spent in prayer.

Early on Wednesday morning, the Streetreach team members were collected from their accommodation in Jordantown and brought to the parish centre for breakfast. Following morning worship, final plans were made for the day ahead. Before bedtime that night, the team would oversee the running of a children's club, engage in practical work throughout the parish, undertake a series of prayer walks, pay a visit to the summer bowls in the parish centre, pray with people in New Mossley and Ballyduff, and oversee detached youth work.

At the debrief session, it was inspiring and moving to hear of all that took place during the day, and to listen to the many ways in

SERVE project

The SERVE project for young people exploring leadership in their local parish context got under way in Connor Diocese in September.

The programme is delivered by the Rev Philip Benson, Chair of Connor youth council, and Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie, and is for ages 15 to 19. It includes eight sessions as well as an opportunity to serve at a diocesan event, with a graduation event on November 19.

which God had blessed the young people.

On Thursday, the programme followed a similar pattern, and it was encouraging to see the team build solid relationships with various people who live within the parish. These relationships were evident in the

large number of people who came to the community fun day on the Friday, where we had all sorts of games, inflatables, a barbecue and even a visit from Mickey and Minnie Mouse!

It was nice to see the American team in church on Sunday July 7, just before they headed home the following day. They left a prayer roll for us, which tells something of the story of Streetreach 2019. Parishioners of Mossley have made a commitment to use this prayer roll to seek God continually ahead of Streetreach 2020.

Streetreach 2019 was a wonderful time in the life of our parish. We are thankful to Christina Baillie and the Streetreach team for all their hard work, enthusiasm and dedication. We are already looking forward to hosting Streetreach again in July 2020!



STREETREACH 2019
MOSSLEY PARISH



Louise and Gerald Mwangi with their twin boys Jeremiah, left, and Daniel.

Family committed to ministry in Kenya

It is difficult not to be distracted when talking to Gerald and Louise Mwangi, because their six-month-old twins, Jeremiah and Daniel, are scene-stealers!

The couple, who work as Crosslinks mission partners in Nairobi, Kenya, are currently in Belfast on home assignment.

Gerald came from Nairobi to Belfast Bible College in 2010, and two years later met Louise (née Nicholson), who was teaching in England at the time. Gerald stayed on in Belfast to do a Master's in Theology at Queen's University, and the couple were married in 2015.

It was almost inevitable that Louise would one day become involved in missionary work – her great grandfather, RJ Taylor, was a former principal of Belfast Bible College, her grandparents were missionary teachers in Nigeria, and her aunt worked in Burundi with CMS. “Mission runs in my blood,” Louise admits. She said she had also been inspired by the late Dr Helen Roseveare, who had been her Sunday School teacher.

SERVE

“Helen always said you serve the Lord with whatever you have got wherever you go,” said Louise, whose first mission experience was in Tanzania with Habitat for Humanity when she was 18. She has also been on teaching visits to Ghana, and, immediately after meeting Gerald, she left to work in Nairobi for a year!

The two had agreed that they wanted



A young member of the ‘Transforming Discipleship’ team chats with an older member of a rural community.

to work in mission in Africa, and joined Crosslinks. They are now supported by a number of churches, including Ballinderry Parish in Connor Diocese, where they spoke on September 8.

Gerald and Louise are on home assignment for 2-3 months every year.

Jeremiah and Daniel were born in Nairobi. “They have good facilities in the city, and we were convinced that we did not need to seek medical care anywhere else,” said Gerald. The couple have a good network of family and friends living near their home outside Nairobi city.

The couple work with iServe, an indigenous gospel-driven organisation that exists to promote faithful Bible teaching and servant leadership. iServe operates a number of programmes, including ‘Transforming

Discipleship,’ which runs from January to June each year, working primarily with young people. Gerald describes it as the Kenyan version of a ‘gap year.’

“We want to capture their energy, strength and passion for Jesus before they go to college,” he said. “The programme started in 2017 and numbers are growing. Our vision is that this programme will be replicated around the country. Kenya is huge, and to bring people to where we are is not possible, so we need to take our work into other parts. It is inspiring to encourage other young people to do the work.

“We have found that in country churches, there is not a lot of emphasis on youth work, so we work with churches to help them develop programmes for young people, and we train young people to go back to their own churches to run youth programmes. We work alongside pastors as well. That way we empower the Church.”

Gerald, Louise, and their team of young people run a club for 300 children; they work with the community, and teach life skills in a high school, including running a farm and growing vegetables.

ISOLATED

The couple also lead the young people on a six-week mission experience into rural Kenya to run programmes for children living in isolated communities. “The programme teaches young people how to lead,” Gerald said.

iServe runs a one-year apprenticeship programme for graduates, giving them opportunities of involvement in Christian ministry, while supplementing the ministry of a local church, and often contributing to their career development. “If we find someone passionate about mission and Christian teaching, we link them with other organisations, including some in England and Northern Ireland,” Gerald said.

“Our hope is that those young people will not just know the gospel, but will take the good messages of the cross wherever they go.”

The family plans to remain in Kenya. “We see a need outside Nairobi to start up discipleship churches, but you never know where God wants you to be,” said Louise.

She said family and ministry work together. “With ministry, it does not have to be one or the other. The children can help you. People come closer, so although the twins are small, they are doing ministry too.”



Connor's three archdeacons with special guests at the evening session of Connor Synod. From left: Archdeacon George Davison, Bishop's Commissary; Rhonda Willoughby, Naas Union, Diocese of Meath and Kildare; Phil Potter, guest speaker; the Ven Andrew Forster, Archdeacon of Ardboe, Diocese of Armagh; Sister Karen Webb, North Belfast Centre of Mission; Archdeacon Stephen McBride; and Archdeacon Paul Dundas.

Bishop records video message for Synod

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, sent a video message to Connor Synod which met in Ballymena on June 13.

In the video, played in place of the presidential address, Bishop Alan spoke about his ongoing treatment for prostate cancer, thanked the people of the diocese for their prayers, and paid tribute to his three archdeacons, who have taken turns to act as commissary.

Synod was chaired by the commissary at the time, the Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Belfast.

During the business of Synod, which met in Ballymena Elim Centre, tributes were paid to the late Dean Fred Rusk and the late Archdeacon Albert Duncan.

Dean John Bond was welcomed as the new Diocesan Curate, following the retirement of Canon Ken Ruddock. Archdeacon Davison said: "We recognise how big a task it is and it needs someone with the depth of knowledge of the diocese and parish to take this on."

The report of Diocesan Council and Associated Motions were proposed by the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth and seconded by Andrea Cotter.

Many speakers paid tribute to the diocesan development team, including the Rev Andrew Campbell, Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin, who made particular mention of Youth Officer, Christina Baillie, and her team, and Diocesan Development Officer, Trevor Douglas, who had helped



Enjoying the coffee and fellowship are, from left: Dr Brian Sims, George Woodman and Arthur Macartney.

develop a parish strategy. "The support and resources we as clergy have on offer are invaluable as we seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in mission," Andrew said.

Archdeacon Paul Dundas, rector of Christ Church, Lisburn, praised the team for activities including Summer Madness, Streetreach, the 'Journey' resource and the All Aboard programme. He said Patrick's Mysterious Adventures, staged in Christ Church Parish, had been a clear presentation of the story of St Patrick and his Christian faith, and had passed that message on to hundreds of children and adults.

He congratulated Connor Children's Officer, Jill Hamilton, Sister Karen Webb from the North Belfast Centre of Mission, and his curate, the Rev Derek Harrington, for putting the event together.

The Rev Tracey McRoberts, rector of St

Matthew's and Mid Belfast Rural Dean, said Connect Base, the North Belfast Centre of Mission, had made a real difference in the area. "It has brought cohesion to parishes through blessing, encouragement, support and a listening ear," she said.

Archdeacon Davison thanked the entire diocesan team. "We owe them a huge debt of gratitude," he said.

The archdeacon made a presentation to the Rev Canon Will Murphy, who has retired as Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO) after 27 years, and his successor, the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, spoke about Vocation Sunday (September 13).

Before the end of discussions around the Diocesan Council report, Archdeacon Davison expressed gratitude to lay readers who, he said, do a tremendous job.

There was a presentation from Police Service of Northern Ireland Chief Superintendent Simon Walls on the Scamwise NI project, which aims to protect people from being scammed.

Business was suspended as delegates enjoyed dinner in St Patrick's Parish Hall. Back in the Synod hall, Dean Stephen Forde took the opportunity to encourage people to consider coming along to St Anne's for Choral Evensong and hear 'a top class choir in a beautiful place of reflection.'

Synod agreed a motion proposed by the Rev Amanda Adams that the partnership with Yei Diocese in South Sudan be continued for two years from 2019.

Before the close of business, Mr Ken Gibson, Hon Lay Secretary, thanked the three archdeacons on behalf of the laity, and the Rev Dr Alan McCann added his thanks on behalf of the clergy.

The evening continued with a keynote speech by Phil Potter, retired Archbishop of Canterbury's missionary and leader of the Church of England Fresh Expressions Team, on the topic 'A Heart for Mission.'

Archdeacon Paul Dundas then chaired a panel discussion on IDLE (Inter Diocesan Learning Experience), made up of the Ven Andrew Forster, Archdeacon of Ardboe, Diocese of Armagh; Rhonda Willoughby, Naas Union, Diocese of Meath and Kildare; Phil Potter and Sister Karen Webb, North Belfast Centre of Mission. This was followed by discussion and questions.

Earlier in the day, a Service of Holy Communion was held in St Patrick's, Ballymena.

Unpacking GDPR

A series of seminars and one-to-one sessions on data protection regulations, run across the diocese by the Church of Ireland's Data Protection Officer, Rebekah Fozzard, was well attended.

The seminars took place in Old School House, St Patrick's, Ballymoney on June 5; Christ Church Hall, Lisburn, on June 6; and St Brigid's, Mallusk, on June 7. Rebekah also hosted one-to-one sessions at the three venues.

In an engaging and informative manner, Rebekah provided her audiences with practical advice and guidance on data protection.

There was an opportunity for questions during the seminars, which were open to diocesan staff, clergy, honorary secretaries, honorary treasurers and parish administrators.

One attendee said: "Rebekah unpacked the detail of the GDPR requirements very clearly, outlining each parish's obligations



Some of those who attended the Lisburn seminar.

under data protection law, and explaining how we can meet these requirements in the day-to-day life of the parish. The seminar was extremely helpful."

Rebekah's GDPR guidance documents for dioceses and parishes are available on the Church of Ireland website.

Service of Ordination of priests

Four new priests were ordained in Connor Diocese at a service in St Patrick's, Ballymena, on September 8.

The Rev Peter Stanley Blake was ordained for Antrim Parish; the Rev Emma May Carson was ordained for Ballymena and Ballyclug; the Rev Stu Reid was ordained for Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin;

and the Rev Maithrie White-Dundas, was ordained for St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

They were ordained by the Rt Rev Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry, as the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, is on sick leave.

The preacher was the Archdeacon of Dalriada, the Ven Paul Dundas.



At the service of ordination of priests on September 8 are, front row, from left: The Rev Stu Reid; the Rev Maithrie White-Dundas; the Rt Rev Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry; the Rev Emma Carson; and the Rev Peter Blake. Back row, from left: The Rev Canon Mark McConnell, rector, Ballymena and Ballyclug; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; Archdeacon Stephen McBride; Archdeacon George Davison; Archdeacon Paul Dundas; the Rev Clifford Skillen, Bishop's Chaplain, and the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Diocesan Director of Ordinands. Photo: Norman Briggs.

St Polycarp's Choir tour to Truro

The choir of St Polycarp's, Finaghy, visited Truro Cathedral in Cornwall for its ninth annual summer tour, singing Choral Evensong on July 31 and August 1 and 2.

Previous tours have included Portsmouth Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, the chapels of three Cambridge Colleges, Chester Cathedral and St Patrick's and Christ Church cathedrals, Dublin.

Conducted by St Polycarp's Director of Music, Simon Neill, the choir sang the canticles on successive evenings to the settings Harwood in A flat, St Polycarp Evening Canticles by Philip Stopford and Dyson in D. The choir also sang three anthems.

The guest organist was David Stevens, former Master of the Choristers of Belfast Cathedral. Lessons at the first two services were read by the Rev Louise Stewart, rector of Finaghy and Upper Malone.

Choir members were supported by a number of spouses and friends, with two past members living and working in Manchester and London respectively, travelling south to sing again with their former colleagues.



St Polycarp's Choir members pictured in Truro Cathedral, Cornwall.

Following the final Evensong of the tour, members and friends attended a reception hosted by the Cathedral's Precentor, Canon Simon Griffiths, who said that it had been a delight to welcome St Polycarp's choir and friends. "The standard of music was excellent and choir members did St Polycarp's and the Church of Ireland proud," he said.

Simon Neill said: "The choir not only sang some spectacular music, but also enjoyed much socialising, which showcased the great family ties we all have together. Each member gives freely of their time and finances to make our tours a reality and this year was another triumphant success.

"We are very much looking forward to celebrating our 10th year of tours when we will sing in the historic grandeur of St Paul's Cathedral, London, next July."



At the launch of the multilingual audio guide in Belfast Cathedral are, from left: Events and Tourism Assistant, Lorna Towns; Tourism and Visitor Services Manager, Helen Graham; Dean Stephen Forde; Judith Henderson, Tourism NI; and Mike Johnston, Friends of Belfast Cathedral.

Cathedral launches multilingual guide

Visitors to Belfast Cathedral can now avail of a new £50,000 state-of-the art audio guide, with tours of the historic building available in eight languages.

The guide takes visitors on a self-led journey through the cathedral, and is available in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Polish, Mandarin and Italian.

This project, launched on August 9, has been achievable through funding from Tourism NI's Immersive Technology programme (£25,000). The capital programme supports projects which have at their core an immersive technology solution that creates compelling reasons for visitors to come to Northern Ireland, as well as encouraging them to stay longer and spend more.

Further funding (£12,500) was provided by the Friends of Belfast Cathedral, who were founded in 1894 with the aim of assisting the dean and cathedral board in promoting interest in the cathedral and knowledge of its history. The remainder of the cost was covered by the cathedral board.

The project will allow visitors of different nationalities to discover the stories of the cathedral, learning its history through words and music, and leaving with a real sense of the important role Belfast Cathedral has played within the city.

The tender for this project was awarded to VOX Group, who have previously worked on high-profile tourism projects worldwide, including St Peter's Basilica in Rome and Stonehenge.

Helen Graham, Belfast Cathedral Tourism and Visitor Services Manager at the time of the launch, said: "We are delighted to have received the funding for this project, without which it simply wouldn't have been possible to create this fantastic multilingual guide for our beautiful cathedral.

"It is fantastic to be able to offer an engaging experience for our visitors, particularly those who are coming from overseas, who previously would not have been able to connect with our space in the same way."

Caroline Bell, Tourism NI capital funding team manager, said: "The new multilingual audio guide at Belfast Cathedral is a fantastic addition to the visitor offering in Belfast, providing a unique way for residents of Northern Ireland and international visitors to immerse themselves fully in the history of its walls and uncover the stories behind them.

"We congratulate the team at Belfast Cathedral for their hard work in delivering a compelling new addition to their tourism product."

The audio guide is among a number of improvements to the visitor experience at Belfast Cathedral, including new interpretation throughout the building, the introduction of a children's corner, and an innovative trail for both families and schools to enjoy.

Former Dean is new Diocesan Curate

The Very Rev John Bond, former Dean of Connor, has succeeded the Rev Canon Ken Ruddock as Diocesan Curate.

Ordained in 1967 for the curacy of St Paul, Lisburn, Dean Bond served as curate of Finaghy from 1970-1977, and was rector of Ballynure and Ballyeaston prior to his appointment to the Parish of Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin, where he remained for 17 years until his retirement in 2016.

Welcoming Dean Bond as Diocesan Curate at Synod, Bishop's Commissary, Archdeacon George Davison, said: "We recognise how big a task it is and it needs someone with the depth of knowledge of the diocese and parish to take this on."



The Very Rev John Bond, Connor Diocesan Curate.

New Rural Dean for Derriagh

The Rev James Boyd, rector of Derryvolgie Parish, has been appointed Derriagh Rural Dean.

After training for ordination at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute in Dublin, James was curate in the parish of Magheralin with Dollingstown, Diocese of Down and Dromore, for four years, before his appointment as rector of Holy Trinity, Dromore, Co Tyrone, Diocese of Clogher.

He was vicar of Willowfield Parish, Belfast, from 2015 until his move to Derryvolgie.



The Rev James Boyd, new Rural Dean for Derriagh.



Congratulations to Mr Jim Perry MBE, a member of St Patrick's Parish, Ballymena, and Connor diocesan lay reader, who has been appointed Deputy Lieutenant for County Antrim. Jim is pictured with the Chief Executive of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Anne Donaghy, and the Mayor, Councillor Maureen Morrow.



Mr Richard Cotter, Finance and Administration Manager with Connor Diocese, was commissioned a diocesan lay reader at a service in St Patrick's, Ballymena, on June 9. Pictured are, from left: The Rev Canon Mark McConnell, rector, St Patrick's; Archdeacon George Davison, Bishop's Commissary; Mr Richard Cotter; the Rev Alan McCann, preacher; and the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, Diocesan Director of Ordinands and former Warden of Readers.



Mrs Kathleen Chapman celebrated her 100th birthday on June 23. Among those who called to wish her a happy birthday were friends from Christ Church, Lisburn, and her rector, the Ven Paul Dundas, back left.



Mossley Parish Bowling Club raised £1,400 for charity through its popular summer bowls series which involved more than 30 bowlers each Wednesday evening during the summer months. The annual summer bowls raises funds for different charities, and this year proceeds were donated to Guide Dogs NI and Air Ambulance NI. The cheques were handed over to Grace Williams (Air Ambulance) and Diane Marks and Andrea Hope (Guide Dogs NI) on September 18.



Members of the congregation of Carnmoney Parish Church tied ribbon to a long rope to signify their desire to remain in the vine, during the family service on September 15. They had been thinking that Jesus said He was the vine and we are the branches, and all need to stay connected to Him in order to bear fruit.