

CONNOR

connections

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Parishioners from All Saints', Belfast, at their parish weekend in Castlewellan in February.

Wonderful weekend for All Saints' Parish

Almost 180 people from All Saints', Belfast, descended on Castlewellan Castle, Co Down, from February 21-23 for a weekend of fun and Bible teaching.

The speaker was the Rev William Taylor, rector of St Helen's, Bishopsgate, London. Over the weekend, William led the group through John 13-17: Jesus' final teaching session with his disciples before he went to the Cross.

Children's ministry was led by a team from CEF (Child Evangelism Fellowship), and the teens were taught by Matthew Topley, a Church of Ireland ordinand, and his wife Erin, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh Diocesan Youth Worker.

All Saints', Belfast, comprises two congregations: The 11am all-age congregation and the 7.30pm 'UniChurch' members. The weekend away provided an opportunity for the two congregations to spend time together, growing both in their

knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus, and in friendship and fellowship.

Amanda, a fashion designer, wrote: "The weekend both inspired and challenged me in a great way through the Bible teachings and discussions with my peers.

"I loved having the opportunity to grow in friendship and community with both the older and the younger generations of our church congregation."

Matthew, a music student, reflected: "I really enjoyed the weekend. It was great to spend time with friends and to meet others in the congregation and get to know them too.

"I was also really encouraged by William Taylor's teaching. It was great to be reminded from John to spend time in God's Word and to trust him in producing fruit in our lives."

Evelyn, a retired teacher, said: "As an older member of the congregation, and one who has been on 'The Way' for many years, I found William's talks most refreshing. As he opened God's Word, we were enlightened as to who Jesus is, why he came, what our response should be, and how we should live a godly life.

"I enjoyed the friendship and fellowship, especially of so many young people, eager to learn more of the good news of Jesus Christ."

All Saints' Parish gives great thanks to God for a wonderful weekend together.



Audrey Anderson, a member of the choir at St Colmanell's Parish Church, Ahoghill, for 70 years, was presented with a gift from the choir, led by Michael Ashcroft, and a bouquet of flowers on behalf of the wider church family at the all-age service on February 23. Also in the picture is the rector of Ahoghill and Portglenone, the Rev Dennis Christie.

Institution in Greenisland

The Rev Jacqueline Mould was introduced as priest-in-charge of Greenisland Parish at a service in the Church of the Holy Name on February 25.

Jacqueline is pictured (below) with the Ven George Davison, Archdeacon of Belfast and Bishop-designate of Connor, the Rev Brian Lacey, Rural Dean of North Belfast, and the Rev Canon Tom Keightley, former rector of Belvoir Parish, guest preacher.

The church was packed with well-wishers from Greenisland and Belvoir, and also from Templepatrick and Donegore, where Jacqueline's husband Jeremy is rector.



The institution of the Rev Jacqueline Mould in Greenisland on February 25.

Movie nights out!

The Rev Peter Blake, curate of All Saints' Parish, Antrim, a keen cinema-goer, organised a couple of movie nights for parishioners which proved a big hit!

During February, Peter arranged a visit for the newly-formed Men's Fellowship to the new Starbucks coffee house at The Junction and booked tickets for the 24 participants to see the Oscar-winning Sam Mendes film '1917.'

Peter also organised a similar evening for the ladies in the parish, and 47 seats were needed to accommodate all those who wished to see 'Emma,' an adaptation of the Jane Austin novel.

Support for AgeNI

Members of the Select Vestry of Kilbride Parish Church presented a cheque for £300 to help the work of AgeNI in Ballyclare on March 9.

Hazel McDonald handed over the cheque to Mary Todd from the Ballyclare branch of AgeNI, accompanied by Lillian Lyttle, Carol Ireland and the rector of Kilbride, the Rev Canon David Humphries.

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Cover photo: Alicia Duncan and Roger Goodliffe entertain their neighbours on a Sunday afternoon in Ballymoney. Their singalong has been popular during the coronavirus lockdown. Photo: Liz Wallace.




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

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Good News in challenging times



Dear friends, in many ways it seems as if the world has changed since the last edition of 'Connor Connections!'

Almost out of the blue, an invisible virus has taken our lives and all that seemed familiar and turned them upside down. We have been confined to our homes - many of them have been turned into workplaces and venues for home schooling. Some people have been furloughed from their jobs and others have been working in unprecedented circumstances as we battle this devastating pandemic.

Our church life has been challenged greatly too. The familiar, comforting, gathering together for worship in a well-loved building has had to be put on hold. Baptisms and weddings have been postponed, though sadly not so with funerals, as we have laid to rest members of our congregations without the usual opportunities to meet as a community and grieve together with those who have been bereaved. These have been a challenging number of months for the Church indeed!

However, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is Good News even in the most challenging of circumstances. When we are lonely, the

Gospel speaks to us of fellowship; when we are broken, the Gospel speaks to us of restoration; when we are bereaved, the Gospel speaks to us of life! Christ is still Lord of the earth, and because of that his people are still a people of hope.

In the pages of this magazine, you will find recorded just some of the ways that parishes across the Diocese of Connor have been responding to the challenge of continuing to proclaim the Gospel as they love and serve the communities of which they are a part. Do take time to read, to give thanks and to pray for the work that is recorded here and for the life and work of people and parishes across this diocese.

These may be challenging days, but the Church of Christ is alive and active in Connor Diocese! I'm grateful to serve alongside you as we respond to the call of Jesus to 'Come, follow me' in the days that lie ahead.

**Yours in Him,
George**

Alicia leads singalong a Sunday!

There's nothing like a good old singalong in times of adversity, and on Sundays, Ballymoney parishioner, Alicia Duncan, is helping her neighbours raise their voices - and their spirits.

Alicia, a retired secondary school teacher, plays the keyboard while her neighbour, Roger Goodliffe, plays clarinet. Their neighbours in Beech Hill, Ballymoney, come out into their gardens to join in this weekly ritual.

Now self-isolating alone, Alicia, whose husband Albert, former Archdeacon of Dalriada, died in February last year, says the singalong on Sunday afternoons cheers everyone up.

"It was the brainchild of my neighbour Roger, who came out onto his lawn for a few Sundays with his clarinet, and we would all gather round - from a safe distance - and sing along to his playing," she said.

"Then he suggested I play the piano. I didn't have a keyboard, so Roger got one for me and now we play as a duet for



Alicia's neighbours enjoying the music!

about three quarters of an hour."

Roger normally selects a theme in advance. "They are not hymns," Alicia said. "Although some of the children like to sing songs they have learned in Sunday School. On previous Sundays we have had Frank Sinatra, Irish Songs and Disney songs."

Alicia, who is an experienced pianist and organist (she still helps out in church on occasions) has no bother picking up a new tune. "I enjoy it, I think it cheers people up in the situation we are in," she says.

Andy steps up to Kilimanjaro challenge

Well done to the Rev Andy Heber, vicar of Carnmoney, who has climbed the height of Mount Kilimanjaro using the stairs in the vicarage.

Andy successfully completed the Mount Kilimanjaro Challenge, an ascent of more than 6,000 metres, in the course of 26 days, starting on May 10. To reach the peak of the fourth highest mountain in the world, he climbed a total of 2,130 flights of stairs - or 31,952 individual stairs!

When he began the challenge, Andy said: "These days of restrictions and lockdown are testing us all; however, it's important to remember that our lives are safer and easier compared with many people in our world. In less developed countries with fewer resources and a much more basic infrastructure, even the ability to wash your hands regularly is a luxury, let alone the availability of sufficient hospital beds and ventilators. Over the coming months, as the coronavirus hits many of the less developed countries in our world, the effects will be devastating."



The Rev Andy Heber competing in a past marathon.

Tearfund launched its climbing challenge to raise funds to provide aid in these countries, promoting hygienic practices and seeking to build adequate hand

washing stations to prevent the spread of the virus.

Andy admitted that scaling Mount Kilimanjaro, which stands at 5,895 metres tall, was one of his long-held ambitions.

After finishing on June 4, he said it hadn't been as tough as he had anticipated. "Once I got into my rhythm, I found it easier to keep going and do my daily target in one run rather than shorter batches, particularly as I needed a shower after each run," he said. "Some days I was running 90 or 100 flights in one run which enabled me to have three days off during the 26 days."

He did confess that he walked rather than ran up one flight each day - the early morning one. "I brought my wife Lynne a cup of coffee in bed every day, didn't want to spill the coffee!" he explained.

Andy has raised £3,266 for Tearfund through his Just Giving page and monies donated by cheque, and the money is still coming in. "The money raised so far is six times what I was aiming to raise so I am absolutely thrilled," Andy said. "The stair carpet is well worn and my knees are stiff, but I am looking forward to a couple of weeks rest now before I resume my outdoor runs again."

Clocking up the miles for Fields of Life

Members of a team from Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, are currently walking to Uganda, metaphorically speaking, after a visit to St Apollo School in Luwero Diocese had to be cancelled.

The team was due to travel to Uganda on June 27 to visit the school, built by the parish in conjunction with Fields of Life.

When all Fields of Life mission trips were cancelled before Easter, the Ven Paul Dundas, rector of Christ Church, spoke to Bishop Eridard of Luwero. "Uganda is also in lockdown. Churches are closed, schools are closed and people cannot move about. They do not have the technology that most of us do, and they are very concerned about finances and people's wellbeing," Paul said.

Richard Spratt, Fields of Life Chief Executive, had come up with the idea of walking the 6,064 miles from his home to the Fields of Life Office in Uganda to raise awareness and funds in the fight against coronavirus in Uganda.

The Christ Church Fields of Life team decided to walk too - observing all the rules of isolating, social distancing etc. At the end of May, the team, along with some



Richard and Janice Thompson are taking part in Christ Church Parish's Uganda challenge.

family and friends, had clocked up 3,860 miles walking and cycling, and are at least as far as Addis Ababa in Ethiopia!

Paul said: "We want to support the needs of St Apollo School during lockdown. There are a lot of children who don't have access to technology, education or good nutrition. We live in a world of great uncertainty, where education is still so important."

Christ Church Parish began its challenge on May 1. "This will keep us focused as a group," said Paul. "When we get those 6,064 miles done, we will have got there."

The Rev Derek Kerr has also been walking and raising funds to support Richard Spratt's appeal - to date Derek has passed his 100-mile target and raised more than £700 for Fields of Life.



Bishop-designate George Davison.

'Every single person has a part to play'

Connor Bishop-designate George Davison is having a longer wait than most to be consecrated bishop of a diocese. The Archdeacon of Belfast and rector of St Nicholas' Parish Church, Carrickfergus, was appointed Bishop of Connor by the Episcopal Electoral College for the diocese on February 17.

Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic meant his consecration, scheduled for May 1, had to be postponed indefinitely.

Bishop-designate George said: "The delay has been somewhat frustrating, but no different to the experiences of many people in these challenging days, and nothing compared to the suffering of those who have lost loved ones as a result of Covid-19."

He continued: "The months since my appointment have been a gradual transition as increasingly I have taken on the responsibilities of the role of bishop, despite not yet being consecrated. The amount of time spent on diocesan business has increased rapidly and my colleagues in St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, the Revs Brian Courtney and Heather Cooke, have been shouldering more of the pastoral responsibilities in the parish."

In an interview conducted before lockdown, Bishop-designate George said he was humbled and honoured at his appointment as bishop, in succession to the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy who retired last December. "I am very conscious of the great responsibility that is being entrusted to me. I am immensely thankful for the gifted colleagues who serve the Church in Connor Diocese, and look forward to serving with them as we seek to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in the years ahead," he said.

The 54-year-old is an Honorary Secretary of the Church of Ireland's General Synod. He is married to Nadine and they have two children - Erin, 26, and James, 23.

"I see the life of the Church as a community and a team that works to build each other up in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, so I am already enjoying working with the team that is in place in Connor Diocese," he said.

"I want to see every single person, ordained or lay, recognise that they have a part to play in this diocese. I'd like to build on what has been done already, and nurture a sense of us being the body of Christ - a sense that we need each other, that we can work together and that actually we are only at our best when everybody plays their part. We have a lot of amazing people. I want to encourage them to recognise the gifts God has given them and the call to use each one of those gifts in Christ's service."

The bishop-designate recognises that his appointment will raise his profile in the city of Belfast. "My role is primarily to build up the Church in the city. "I am not some sort of quasi-politician, but I do want to encourage people in our local parishes to play a constructive part in building good community relations with people from other denominations and none," he said.

He believes changing patterns of society present a big challenge, particularly in

north and west Belfast. "Parishes with long and proud histories of serving their community find themselves faced with declining numbers," he reflected. "My priority in the city of Belfast is to encourage congregations to think about how best they can work together to grow the Church and serve the communities around them."

He is looking forward to working within the House of Bishops. "In a sense, my role as Honorary Secretary has given me the opportunity to get to know the bishops and to work with them, but there has been quite a radical turnover in the last few months and we are not done yet! These are exciting times in the Church of Ireland."

The bishop-designate is passionate about worldwide mission. "The Church is a global community and we all benefit when we engage with others around the world," he said.

A keen walker, Bishop-designate George took a sabbatical to walk the Camino Frances in 2017, covering 550 miles. He described it as 'a remarkable experience.' "On the Camino I found it easy to worship the Creator in the midst of his creation; I enjoyed the space for prayer and some interesting discussions about life and faith," he reflected.

Whilst it is still not possible to make definite plans, the bishop-designate hopes that the lockdown restrictions will have eased sufficiently to allow a small consecration service to take place early in the autumn.

"We won't be able to have the big, cathedral-filled occasion that consecrations usually involve, but hope to organise live-streaming of the service so as many as possible may share in the service," he said.

CV of a bishop

A native of south Belfast, Bishop-designate George has a BD from St Andrew's University, Scotland. He also studied at Oakhill Church of England College, London and at the then Church of Ireland Theological College, Dublin.

He was ordained a deacon in June 1992 and served his curacy in St Mark's Parish, Portadown. In October 1995, he was appointed rector of Kinawley and Holy Trinity, Derrylin, Co Fermanagh, where he remained until his institution as rector of Carrickfergus in June 2009. In Kilmore, he was Diocesan Director of Ordinands, and Archdeacon of Kilmore. In November 2011 the bishop-designate was elected Clerical Honorary Secretary of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland.

Retirement of Bishop's Senior Domestic Chaplain

The Rev Clifford Skillen has retired from his position as the Bishop of Connor's Senior Domestic Chaplain. He had served in that capacity throughout the entire 12 years of Bishop Alan Abernethy's episcopacy, having been appointed by Bishop Alan shortly after he became bishop in 2007.

Clifford said: "It was always my intention to step down when Bishop Alan retired - and prior to the diocese entering a new era under a new bishop - though I didn't anticipate it would be quite so soon or in such unfortunate circumstances as Bishop Alan's ill health.

"It has been a great personal privilege - and also hugely enjoyable - not only to have served Bishop Alan and the diocese in this position throughout all of his episcopacy, but also to have been able to play even a small part, especially in institution and ordination services which marked very special occasions in the life of parishes and the ministry of diocesan colleagues.

"I would like to thank Bishop Alan for placing his trust in me and to wish both him and Liz a long and happy retirement. I would also like to wish Bishop-designate George every blessing for the future.

"I am very grateful to the members of the chaplaincy team - the Revs John Anderson, Paul Jack, John McClure and Tracey McRoberts - for their availability and willing assistance if and when the need arose."

Bishop-designate George said: "The diocese owes a great debt of gratitude to Clifford for his faithful support of Bishop Alan at so many public occasions in the life of the diocese.

"As he retires from this role I, and I'm sure all of us, offer him our sincere thanks and wish him God's blessing in the years ahead."



The Rev Clifford Skillen with Bishop Alan Abernethy at the Thanksgiving Service last December prior to the bishop's retirement.



Marie Anderson with her Maundy purses and letter from Her Majesty.

Marie says Maundy money is an honour

Congratulations to Marie Anderson, a parishioner of Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, who received the gift of Maundy money from Her Majesty the Queen.

The Maundy purses are traditionally handed out by Her Majesty on Maundy Thursday, and Marie and her husband Ivan had been invited to the special service in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle.

Marie knew that, due to the coronavirus crisis, the service would not be held, but the arrival of the Maundy purses in the post came as something of a surprise. Enjoying their garden while self-isolating, neither Marie nor Ivan heard the doorbell when the special delivery from Her Majesty arrived, and didn't open the parcel containing the two purses until a family member collected it from the Post Office two days later!

"I don't feel very deserving of it," said Marie. "It is all down to Bishop Alan." Bishop Alan Abernethy, former Bishop of Connor, nominated Marie for the honour. "I knew the bishop from attending church events and his annual Lenten Talks, but I got to know him a bit better because we went on the same journey at the Cancer Centre," Marie said.

"He was getting his radiotherapy at 12 noon and I was getting mine at 11.30am. We enjoyed each other's company while waiting. I had 27 sessions and the bishop had more, but we went through the whole thing together."

Marie has been a parishioner of Christ Church for more than 50 years. She was a Sunday School teacher for more than 20 years, has been a long-term member of

the Mothers' Union, worked as the parish administrator for five years and was a secretary of the Select Vestry.

She and Ivan were due to go to Windsor Castle just days before jetting off on a family holiday to Portugal. Now the couple are confined to their home and garden. Marie's cancer treatment has ended, but she still suffers from lymphedema in one of her legs. "I really love being out in the garden and have to drag myself away to rest my leg, but if I wear the special stockings and do my exercises it is not too bad," she said.

Marie added that she is very honoured to receive the Maundy money. "I still can't get my head round why I was chosen. There was a letter from the Lord High Almoner along with the Queen's letter, and I read about what people have done in church circles and I think, that's not me! There are lots of people who are much more deserving!"

Marie plans to keep the specially minted coins as an heirloom for all the family.

Royal Maundy is one of the most ancient ceremonies retained in the Church of England. The Queen commemorates Maundy by offering 'alms' to retired pensioners, who have been recommended by clergy and ministers of all denominations, in recognition of their service to the Church and to the local community.

Lockdown keeps Rathlin Covid-19 free

To date, Rathlin Island, part of the parish of Ballintoy, Dunseverick and Rathlin in the Archdeaconry of Dalriada, has recorded no cases of Covid-19.

And the islanders have taken strict measures to ensure it stays that way, with no one outside of the Rathlin community allowed onto the island.

Julie-Ann McMullan, churchwarden of St Thomas', Rathlin, says the restrictions have impacted the community in different ways, although in her own case, life is carrying on pretty much as normal on the family farm.

"Rathlin as a community decided together to close down the island," Julie-Ann explained. "We want to protect everyone from the virus, especially the most vulnerable. The Rathlin Development Community Association rang each family and asked their opinion. At that time, no one knew how long the lockdown would last."

There is currently only one ferry - The Spirit - travelling between Rathlin and the mainland at Ballycastle. "This is the cargo boat which can take cars, the oil lorry etc," said Julie-Ann. "It only does two sailings per day, which is a vast difference to what it would usually be doing at this time of year."

LOCKDOWN

"No one is allowed onto the island as it is in total lockdown. Groceries, parcels etc are delivered down to the slipway or the office. The parcels are set down on the slipway by the delivery drivers who then step away to allow the crew to load these into a designated van. All crew members and shore staff are in PPE. The van is then put on the boat."

"When they return to Rathlin, the parcels are delivered to a designated place for individuals to pick up. It's a system that works well. For any individual shielding or vulnerable, the parcels are delivered to their door."

The island's Post Office is still operating and the grocery shop is well stocked with fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, milk and other essentials. "Sometimes there will be fresh fish and crab, if a local fisherman catches some," said Julie-Ann. "Lots of people order online from the mainland supermarkets as they will deliver to the boat. Personally, I order from the local shops in Ballycastle, as most have started up a delivery service since Covid-19."



Julie-Ann McMullan, churchwarden at St Thomas' Parish Church, Rathlin Island, outside the church with her daughters, Sorin, Arah and Kaia.

There is only one pub on Rathlin, McCuaig's Bar, which closed in accordance with government legislation. "They were granted permission to offer a carry-out service which is great because they don't only sell alcohol, but have a great selection of crisps, chocolate, sweets and soft drinks," Julie-Ann said.

Despite Rathlin's isolation, social distancing rules apply on the island the same as they do elsewhere in the UK. "Although no one on Rathlin has Covid-19, or has shown any symptoms, everyone is still taking it seriously and adhering to social distancing," said Julie-Ann. "There are a lot of vulnerable and elderly people on the island. Our family is very lucky as we live down at the Rue on a farm - we never see anyone anyway, except the postman."

WALK

"Since this started, the kids and I walk the dog every day and have only met people on a few occasions. In our case, it does not feel like we are in the midst of a pandemic, as this lockdown is affecting everyone differently."

"We are very lucky in where we live. We have the beach to play on, we can swim, we go canoeing, we go camping and we go walking and hiking. All-in-all, as a family we are having a great time and thoroughly enjoying our time together."

"One big change is that my eldest daughter Sorin, who is 14, is in secondary school in Ballycastle and prior to lockdown



St Thomas' Church, Rathlin Island.

she travelled back and forward on the boat each day. Now she is home schooling - much to her delight."

Julie-Ann is adapting to the changes. "Home schooling three girls is challenging, but so much fun. I'm learning so much. Although we haven't been off the island in 10 weeks, I think the whole family has just grown to accept this as normal."

WILDLIFE

She said the lockdown is having a positive impact on the rich and diverse wildlife of the island. "The air seems so much cleaner. I have noticed an increase in moths and butterflies, not only in numbers, there seems to be a bigger variety of species. I have seen an increase in birds in the garden and again more breeds than before," Julie-Ann explained.

"We swim in the sea all year round and also eat a lot of different seaweeds, and I can see a huge improvement in the shoreline. The smell of diesel used to be so strong, but now it has totally disappeared - I suppose there are fewer boats. Everything seems a lot cleaner, greener and clearer. It's great to have more time to enjoy it."

The rector of Ballintoy and Dunseverick with Rathlin Island, the Rev Patrick Barton, said that he misses his visits to St Thomas' and the Rathlin community.

"We miss him too," said Julie-Ann. "I am the caretaker of the church, so I go down once a week to make sure everything is okay. The church is closed to parishioners just like everywhere else, but we are all enjoying joining in the online services."

"Three parishioners contacted me and asked for the prayer books so they could follow along at home too. Rev Patrick also set up a Sunday School WhatsApp group which has brought all three parishes together and I have had a chance to meet lots of other lovely people. I can join in the group chats and see all the interesting things they are up to."

"We all know Rev Patrick loves his flora and fauna, so it's enjoyable to see all the wildlife pictures on display and my kids really like all the nature stuff. It's great to have this new connection."



Technical challenges

Magheragall Parish

At the outset, with very limited internet connectivity, we felt that uploading services online would not be possible. Also, I am not a broadcaster, and was conscious of taking steps in a new direction, all with immediate effect, without training.

Initially I used the parish Facebook for a daily thought, prayers and readings. In the first week of lockdown, we sent a letter to all 370 households in the parish, offering help.

The April magazine was designed to assist worship at home and keep us connected, and included a daily thought for Holy Week, a monthly schedule of readings and a framework for prayers at home. The content was developed further in May, with the addition of quizzes and material for lockdown entertainment. For some people, this will be their only contact with church over this period.

Since Maundy Thursday, my family and I have been worshipping in the parish church, which is permissible under the guidance, preparing services for broadcast on Facebook. We share two services each Sunday and also recorded a service on VE Day (May 8).

Our Facebook account administrator, Susan Donaghy, has built the page up from its launch in 2012, so we had a very good base at the beginning of the crisis.

The lack of internet remains a great challenge. We are in a rural context, but it is hard to believe just how poor the internet connection is, given that we are just three

miles from the centre of Lisburn! This has been difficult both as a rector and as a family-of-five, all working from home. I have had three online diocesan/rural deanery meetings, and only one proceeded without a problem.

The church is next door to the rectory and is not connected at all. The services recorded by my family are uploaded using mobile data, which can be slow and very frustrating. We recently discovered the Facebook 'schedule' feature which has been a big benefit.

Choosing the material for such services has also been challenging, as the longer the service, the more difficult it is to upload. I have therefore tried to make liturgical choices that work within 30 minutes.

As a rectory family, we have enjoyed praising God in our church through this period. Singing together will be difficult when we return to church. We have been greatly assisted in this respect by the Rev Canon Dr Peter Thompson, rector of St Michael's, Castlecaulfield, and St Patrick's, Donaghmore, who has given us access to the 'Church Hymnal' and 'Thanks and Praise' on Dropbox. In the current pandemic, these have been made available to download free from a Dropbox - the normal cost is £85.

Our online services do seem to be reaching more people than would normally come to church on a Sunday - our Facebook views are around 200-250.

Our Sunday School and JAM teams have been in contact with the children and young people and their parents via

WhatsApp. Initially, we focused on sending short Bible stories from YouTube and craft ideas around Easter time. Since Easter, we have been thrilled that 'All Aboard' has been made available online on the Ripple Connor Facebook page. Thanks to Jill Hamilton, Diocesan Children's Officer.

We are also using the new youth resource, 'Right Now,' with our JAM group. We are able to share this via WhatsApp - thanks to Christina Bailie and her team for creating this really appropriate resource!

Our Sunday School created artwork thanking key workers. We used photos of the children and their work to create a video for our Facebook page, which led into a week of prayer for key workers.

Magheragall Parish is a long-term supporter of Lisburn Foodbank. We have continued that support and also have been able to distribute food on behalf of the Foodbank to families in need. The parish also joined with churches and the community centre in Maghaberry to offer help to those who were isolating or sheltering at home.

As we look to the future, I think we will need to push forward with online services, which will run in tandem with the reopening of churches, because many will find it difficult to come to public worship. Many of our beautiful listed buildings were never intended for social distancing.

To improve our online provision we will, as a parish, have to find solutions to get the church connected to the internet in a more permanent way. I do believe, with God's guidance, we will find ways to overcome and establish links in this new future that we are looking into.

The Rev Nicholas Dark

Communication and partnership



The Rev Canon Jim Carson; Constable John Steele, Tennent Street Neighbourhood Policing team; and Josh Barr, parish children's worker, with packs for the children in the community.

Church of Ireland Lower Shankill (St Stephen and St Michael)

Communication and partnership-working are two key elements in our ministry and they are more important now than ever. We are in a time of significant change and opportunity. What actually is 'Church?' A question for these times!

While we enjoy our 'normal' practices and look forward to going back to them in time, we must consider how to develop and grow the newly-found ways of interacting with people who are, knowingly or not, seeking Christ, but who are not interested in our 'normal church.'

In summer 2019, windows in St Michael's were stoned, causing significant damage. One hundred additional people from the local community, outraged at the damage, 'liked' our Facebook page. Now that we have our Sunday Service on Facebook, it comes up in their news feed and many are watching it. Doesn't God move in mysterious ways!

Our 'congregation' has increased about threefold. People enjoy the informal short service and it is meeting a need for many. They would certainly enjoy the outtakes in what has been a very steep learning curve in terms of recording and editing services!

Every week we have Sunday School, Bible Study, Youth Fellowship and a Family Quiz on 'Zoom.' We are grateful to Jill Hamilton, Diocesan Children's Officer, and Christina Baillie, Connor Youth Officer, for great new online resources for children and youth, and to Karen Webb and Stephen Whitten of the Church Army for their support. Online activities have attracted some parishioners who live far from church and who may not otherwise have been involved - something to think on for the future.

Many older people don't have internet or may not be tech savvy. We have helped

some get online, but have also gone the 'old fashioned' route - burning Sunday Service onto DVDs and delivering a portable DVD player to some households. Our telephone rota maintains regular contact with parishioners, we post monthly magazines and 'Let's Craic Corona,' a fun and devotional sheet which has helped lift spirits for many.

We gave out knitting and crochet patterns for blankets and baby clothes to distribute to people in need. We received confirmation of funding for an oral history project our 'Young at Heart' group is doing in partnership with Bauer Media and we are working on ideas for this.

Our 'church doorstep' ministry, providing free New Testaments, has seen around 60 taken. Many children and families from our afterschool clubs, CLCGB and Messy Church don't have access to internet other than on smartphones which is costly, so we began providing regular Activity Packs shortly after lockdown and have received great feedback.

We usually have weekly contact with 30 children, but are now providing packs for 63 children in the community. Packs have many activities, including crafts with all resources provided. This is a partnership initiative with Jill, Victoria Jackson (Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade), Aimee Gibson (Lambeg) and Lynn Adams (Glenavy). Also, our PSNI Neighbourhood Team which was doing a drama project with us prior to lockdown and is now helping to distribute the packs, and Mothers' Union in Connor Diocese, which provided some financial support.

Collaboration and consolidation in reaching our communities, working in partnership to meet the needs of the many rather than the few, has to be our 'new normal.' Opportunities are there to be seized.

The Rev Canon Jim Carson

Comments most encouraging

Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion

I am doing a six-minute Bible reflection from Monday to Friday, followed by a prayer time of a similar length. This gives the opportunity to include folk from the parish, where permission is given to do so, as with a normal Sunday.

Saturday is more children-orientated, with a song included. I occasionally sing a hymn or song which, surprisingly given my singing, has been appreciated!

My non-stipendary colleague Trevor does a 20-minute service each Sunday morning. All these are posted on Facebook, WhatsApp and emailed to reach as many people as possible. Simple though this may seem, it took me some time to figure it out, and if I go on for more than six and a half minutes, the video still refuses to post!



Canon Derek Kerr delivering a reflection on Facebook.

I have found that people are willing to share my posts to gain a wider audience, and many folk who are not my parishioners at all have commented positively. Comments are shared online, or in person while I am out walking or when a shop visit is necessary. It has been most encouraging.

Specific pastoral situations and vestry meetings are conducted via phone calls or email. It is interesting to note that folk really appreciate a phone call when it is especially needed. Ordinarily, this would not be fitting, as a visit would be required, yet in these days they appreciate it very much. If I had offered to pray for folk down the phone before this, I suspect they would

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have thought it odd. Now people are very willing to say how thankful they are.

We are delighted with the 'All Aboard' resource from Connor Children's Officer Jill Hamilton, and I encourage the parents to use this and share it with others not from our parishes or the Church of Ireland. It's all here ready to go and very well produced.

I really think that the folk in these parishes are well catered for and have good support. Aurelia Kelly, wife of my colleague Trevor, initiated a project inviting people in her area to place items on her front garden. She used the theme of 'The Three Bears.' A great deal of food and toiletries were amassed for the Ballymena Food Bank.

As regards how differently we will do church in future, I hope not differently at all. We must get back together as soon as possible, not only because it is a biblical imperative (Heb 10:25), but also because this command, given by God, knows we need fellowship both for encouragement in the faith and for good mental health.

I will want to gather email addresses and mobile numbers so that we are better prepared should such circumstances arise again. While this may have implications for data protection, I believe it is necessary. If we change, then I hope it instils in folk the need for greater love of neighbour as proof of love of God.

Rev Canon Derek Kerr



The Rev Patrick Barton, left, helping with a Foodbank delivery.

Loving our way through a pandemic

Grouped Parishes of Ballintoy & Dunseverick with Rathlin Island

Our last day of nearly normal services was on St Patrick's Day when, at Holy Communion, we didn't share the cup.

The next morning I set up our new Grouped Parishes of Ballintoy and Dunseverick with Rathlin Island Facebook page. This was initially to keep us connected, provide a space for worship and prayer and share advice through the coronavirus crisis. The page now has 498 followers and counting.

I provided an order of service for Mothering Sunday for people to follow at home with my solo reading at our normal service times. That was well received.

I'm a shy fella and was reluctant to film myself. As a plethora of colleagues popped up on our screens, I was heard to say, 'you'll not catch me doing that!' But when I rang my parishioners, I found they were delighted to hear my voice and, with some gentle prodding, I dived in with live streaming of services on our Facebook page during Holy Week.

On Palm Sunday and Easter Day, I live streamed from Dunseverick and recorded at Ballintoy where there is no WiFi, but I can play recorded music there. Thereafter, I read the service in both churches on a Sunday at the normal times but broadcast one, turn about.

I continue to post a live midweek service

Our core values - Worship, prayer and God's Word

Ballynure and Ballyeaston (Ballyclare)

Our existing online presence has helped greatly in this crisis, firstly through the completion of a new website. It was then decided to focus on the core values that are most important to us - worship, prayer, and God's Word. So we set up an online Sunday morning worship, a weekly Kids' Church, and a nightly service of Late Evening Office or Compline. These have involved many within our church family so as to share the load.

Through Zoom, we host regular weekly gatherings, including a prayer meeting, a Bible study, and a house group. The greatest challenge in getting these platforms up and running was appreciating the time it takes to prepare anything online, including the recording and editing of services. The biggest issue we have faced is ensuring all we do is sustainable and



Volunteers with Together Ballyclare delivering Government food parcels.

manageable for the long term.

Typically our Sunday attendance before coronavirus would have been 240 people. In the first 24 hours of our Sunday worship, we have approximately 280 views, which, if this represents a family, means there are definitely more visitors watching.

We were very conscious of folks who do not have internet. Our midweek and Sunday services are therefore available on

a local phone line that people can listen in to. Also, whilst not regular, a printed service will be posted out to those who are isolating at home.

Our ministries to children and young people are very important to us, and therefore every Sunday we have a dedicated online Kids' Church. Through the week we now have two teen Bible studies, and then a weekly Youth Fellowship gathering involving

from the rectory using my phone. The technology has been a steep learning curve. I miss St Thomas' and Rathlin.

For those we can't reach online, we have a ring-round group, where all who agreed to sharing their phone number are phoned regularly by a small group of volunteers. Both volunteers and recipients are getting a lot out of it and forming new friendships.

On Palm Sunday, we launched a WhatsApp group for the children of the three churches. Through their guardians, they have been staying connected and sharing posts and videos with each other and with our Sunday School leaders. They were able to share a special Easter celebration video on the wider Grouped Parishes Facebook page. It has been a wonderfully encouraging group.

We have established stronger links with Ballycastle Foodbank and I am now delivering food boxes every Friday to those who are sheltering or who have little chance of getting to the shops. It gives me a brief but fulfilling point of contact with parishioners and other folk in the area.

With some form of social distancing set to continue into the foreseeable future, some of our forced innovations in prayer and worship are worth keeping and adapting. The new friendships and sense of togetherness and acts of kindness we are witnessing and sharing will help us love our way through the pandemic and stay functional worshipping church families.

The Rev Patrick Barton

games around the home. In addition, families are regularly contacted to see how our young people are.

At a community level, we saw the need emerging early on to support people who were going to be isolated in their homes. With the support of the local council, an aid programme was formed called 'Together Ballyclare,' providing food deliveries, prescription collections etc. This programme has brought together all of the churches in the area, with 150 volunteers now showing God's love in very practical ways. Our existing Baby Basics ministry is also seeing an increase in referrals to support new mums.

I definitely believe there have been huge positives in how we 'do Church,' including how the love of God can reach out in new ways and pre-recorded services over the phone. I can see challenges that we as Church need to work through if a vaccine is not quickly discovered, including how we offer Holy Communion.

Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth



The Rev Philip Benson gets some assistance from his daughter Hannah.

The challenge of shielding

St Patrick's, Cairncastle, with All Saints', Craigyhill

To date, we have shared Sunday Services, daily prayers and reflections (including Compline and the Litany); we have celebrated the Church's Holy Days with Holy Communion; Holy Week services; Zoom calls; as well as sharing items from our diocese, other parishes etc.

Initially, we recorded from our two churches with the help of our diocesan reader and parish administrator. After I received a shielding letter due to a medical condition, however, we had to work out how best to continue sharing from home.

Our online services have had an incredibly positive response and have reconnected with several families who had lost touch with the parish, as well as seeing new families ask to join our parish community. Many of our parishioners are also sharing our services and prayers with their wider family and friends.

Alongside Facebook and YouTube, we are using our parish WhatsApp group, email, telephone service and audio CDs of services. We also post out a monthly parishioner pack, which includes our parish newsletter and various other resources.

My wife Carolyn has been putting together a weekly Sunday School pack, which we send out to the families who belong to our Sunday School and Messy Church. My five-year-old daughter Hannah is helping us to record the weekly Bible story. Other parishes have also asked for the packs,

and we have been happy to share them. Through Facebook and word of mouth, families who belong to other churches, parishes and none have also asked to receive them. These packs are emailed or posted, as we appreciate that not everyone has access to a computer and printer. Recently we have begun to develop a weekly resource for teenagers.

As a parish, we support the Larne Foodbank. This is the area that has been most difficult with having to shield, as we are not able to leave our home, but this has not stopped us from thinking through how best we can be involved in the community once lockdown lifts. We have, for example, completed a parish community survey, receiving a great response from parishioners and non-parishioners alike. The comments have been positive and constructive. Already we are beginning to understand the needs of the local community and how we as a parish might be able to help meet them in some way.

I think that once restrictions lift, the normality of parish life and worship will resume. However, the crisis has certainly shown the opportunities that are there to share with people the love of God and build his Kingdom. Our experience of the crisis has shown us that faith remains important in the lives of many people, that the Church is still valued, that we must better reach out to the housebound and lonely, and as a parish, we have much to offer to our local community in faith, hope and love.

The Rev Philip Benson

We continue to adapt during crisis

Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan

Our adaption to other means of communicating the Good News during this Covid-19 crisis continues to increase as the lockdown remains in place.

The schedule of posts on our Facebook page includes daily readings and prayers Monday through Thursday; Friday is a devotional for the children to enjoy; Saturday it's Praise and Prayer time; and then we share our regular Sunday service. We have been communicating via email, WhatsApp, text and telephone.

CDK Youth have been using Zoom to host chats, games, and quizzes. We also plan to try Zoom with our Select Vestries, and to organise a virtual coffee morning with the parishioners.

The main challenge for us in using online platforms is poor internet and mobile signal due to the rural location of our parishes. This means that if we try live recordings, they have to be very short!



The Rev Adrian Halligan prepares an online reading and prayer.

The parishes have minimal technology, therefore we need to record, edit, then save the completed recording in a format to upload to Facebook and the telephone

facility. A five-minute recording could take a few hours to complete. All this, coupled with having to learn new video editing software, meant a steep learning curve.

We are currently reaching between 150 and 300 people daily on Facebook. We are definitely reaching out globally, as we have had comments from people in America, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia.

Doing some essential shopping recently with my daughter Abigail, we were stopped by a local store manager who recognised us from the Facebook video she had watched the night before. This lady has no connection with our parishes, but had just happened upon our Facebook page whilst surfing the net.

For those who are not on social media or don't have access to internet, I upload our services, readings, and prayers to a telephone service that the parishioners can call using a local number and listen in. The call is charged at the basic rate and in some cases is included in their call package. I also post and send out emails of the videos, letters, weekly Bible readings and prayers, as well as ringing around our parishioners.

As well as using Zoom to meet, our youth fellowship has sent in videos to be included in our Saturday Praise and Prayer time and

Our daily routines look different

Church of the Holy Spirit, Mossley

Since mid-March, life has changed significantly for all of us. Our daily routines look different and we have become accustomed to a range of new practices like social distancing. Mossley Parish, like every other church, has been hugely impacted by the lockdown process.

Each Sunday morning, instead of meeting in our church building and parish centre, we now upload services to Facebook, YouTube and our parish website (www.mossley.org). It has been encouraging to see large numbers of people, both parishioners and others from further afield, engage with our services.

Five weeks ago, we also recommenced our Bible studies online and we are journeying through Titus. These are uploaded at 7pm each Tuesday evening and the study notes are made available earlier in the afternoon.

One of the big challenges we faced was making these services / studies available to people who have no internet connection. We have now set up a dial-in service, whereby people can listen to an audio version of the service or study on the telephone. A considerable number of people are using this service and greatly appreciate it.

We have been promoting the 'All Aboard' resources which have been created as part of our diocesan children's programme. Additionally, we release an activity sheet and short video for children each Saturday afternoon. The rectory family have also recorded short video messages at Easter and Ascension. These have included a series of crafts which children can attempt at home.

Pastorally, these are difficult times for every parish. In Mossley, we have issued two pastoral letters which offer some practical advice and guidance. The Rev Louise Bowes and I have



Sunday School online in Mossley.

collected medication and picked up groceries for some parishioners who are currently shielding. We have sought to stay in regular contact with parishioners through telephone calls, messages, and emails. A 'Parish Prayer Booklet' was released at the beginning of lockdown, and a prayer line was created. To date, we have received prayer requests from people in Newtownabbey and beyond.

Sadly, we have had a number of bereavements since the lockdown

participated in our May children and youth service video.

Mothers' Union has provided #Lockdown 2020 Survival packs to our youth fellowship and activity packs for our Sunday School children. We encourage children and young people to take part in dance and craft activities and to send in pictures, which are included in some of our Sunday service videos and/or posted on our Facebook page.

The parishes have helped out with distribution of food parcels locally. I am chaplain at Cranswick Foods, Cullybackey, giving pastoral care to the employees. Mothers' Union members have been knitting hearts which can be given to families unable to visit relatives, and crocheting face mask ear guards for NHS and care workers as well as our local undertakers.

We are sociable people and like to meet up and share fellowship, and it will take time after Covid-19 settles for everyone to be comfortable in doing that.

From this crisis, we are learning that we can spread the Good News of our Lord to those who are unable to come to church for whatever reason and at the same time keep them as part of our church family.

Rev Adrian Halligan

began. Bereavements are emotive and sensitive occasions in normal circumstances, but during this pandemic, and due to current restrictions, they are proving to be exceptionally challenging times for everyone. We continue to pray for all who have been bereaved. Several families plan to have memorial services once the restrictions are lifted.

We are thankful for the strong sense of community that exists within Mossley Parish and we are all looking forward to getting 'back to normal' once the lockdown ends. But there are also lessons for all of us to learn from this experience.

Some of our new approaches to mission and ministry may be here to stay. For example, the dial-in service is of great value to housebound parishioners, and we have already received emails from people asking us to continue to upload Bible studies and such like. These are encouraging developments and will result in a widening of our ongoing ministry.

The Rev Peter Jones

Social distancing is bringing us closer!

St Peter's, Antrim Road, Belfast

St Peter's has been imprinted with the prayers of the faithful for 120 years, so it was vital that we should find a means of enabling worship from within the church to continue.

The solution was Facebook, which allows us to broadcast live services of Holy Communion and Morning Prayer. The videos are also available on YouTube, and as an audio recording through a telephone dial-in service.

It is wonderful to be able to continue our familiar style and pattern of worship with members of our congregation, albeit remotely.

This has not been without its challenges. Initially I used my iPhone as a camera, but the sound quality was poor. With a fair amount of divine providence, I was able to connect our sound system to a computer, and feed the video through it, but the improvement in what the congregation could hear was matched equally by a deterioration in what they could see.

And as with all technology, if anything could go wrong, it often did. The sound system would reset itself, or the WiFi connection would fail, or the video feed would lag. On a few exasperated occasions I threw my hands up in the air and cried 'Lord, I am doing this for your benefit, not my own. Please make this work!' And without fail, he acquiesced.

I remembered, however, my own former rector, Canon Walter Lewis, telling me that when it comes to worshipping God, only the best will do. So I resolved to buy a new camera and a video card, and all the stress is gone. Moreover, I was astounded at the generosity of parishioners who have donated towards purchasing this technology. Clearly, what we are doing is wanted and appreciated.

And not just by our regulars. We have many 'visitors' joining us, both from the local area and the other side of the planet. After lockdown ends, it will be interesting to see if this becomes an important missional tool for reaching out into the world.

While the internet has proven to be invaluable in sustaining the rhythm of worship in the parish, it has many other uses too. Every week, I send out an email



In focus! The Rev Brian Lacey.

with the latest parish news and prayer requests. We also use Zoom for Bible Study groups and committee meetings, and some 'face-to-face' pastoral ministries have been made possible using WhatsApp video.

Not everyone uses a computer, and it was vital that we enable and encourage our parish family to keep in touch - even if not literally. All of our parishioners have telephones, and they have become a lifeline.

In addition to my own contact, the members of our Select Vestry have ensured that everyone receives an official phone call from the church on a regular basis. This reminds the recipients that they are not alone, and there have been some great conversations and new friendships formed by people who perhaps previously only knew each other as nodding acquaintances on a Sunday morning. There is a lovely irony, therefore, that social distancing is actually helping to bring us closer together.

Although I do look forward to the day when we can return to some semblance of normality, I believe that many of the changes to our worship and ministries are here to stay. I'm looking to the future with a sense of excitement, that even though we are living through difficult times, God is doing something wonderful.

The Rev Brian Lacey

D-Day veteran Bill looks back on his war

The 75th anniversary of VE Day may have been celebrated in lockdown - but it was still an occasion to remember those who died during World War Two, and to pay tribute to those who were prepared to give their lives for our future freedom. Bill Eames BEM is one of those to whom we say thank you.

Bill, a parishioner of St Mark's Church, Ballymacash, towed gliders across enemy lines and played a key role in D-Day. Even after suffering serious injury when his plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire, Bill guided his crew home and returned to battle just six months later.

Now aged 96, Bill made flying his life, and his services both to the Royal Air Forces Association, as well as his community work in his native Co Fermanagh, were rewarded with a British Empire Medal in the Queen's New Year Honours list this year.

Small in stature, with a firm handshake and a clear voice, Bill now lives a relatively quiet life in Lisburn. Born in Enniskillen in 1923, he flew for the first time at the age of 12, when CW Scott's International Air Circus visited Enniskillen. "My friend George McVitty and I both paid seven shillings and sixpence for the flight," Bill recalls. "I thought it was great. George and I later joined the Air Force. George was killed over Germany before I had even finished my training."

At Portora Royal School, Bill was a member of the Officer Training Corps. He joined the RAF in 1941, and travelled to the USA for secret training. "We were dispersed to different training schools. My group went to the US Air Corps, and I was nine months in Souther Field, Georgia," Bill says. From there he was sent to Toronto.

"There were no phones so I just kept in touch with home through letters. In those

days, parents deserved a lot of credit. Mine did not hold me back. I knew that they did not want to see me go off to war, but it was the thing to do.

"In the early part of the war, my uncle's pub in Sheffield was destroyed by bombs. Fifty people sheltering in the cellar were killed, including my uncle and aunt. My cousin Jean, who was just a baby, had been evacuated to Enniskillen and she grew up as part of my family."

'I was back at base by 0600 having my breakfast, and we were all offered a shot of rum'

On his return to the UK, Bill was stationed at RAF Ashbourne in Derby, flying Whitley and Albemarle aircraft. He later joined 570 Squadron at RAF Hurn near Bournemouth. His squadron specialised in supply drops to the French resistance operatives, generally at low level, at night. He also towed the Horsa glider.

"A lot depended on the weather. We would communicate with wireless operators hidden in forests in the middle of France to arrange the supply drops. It was a very

difficult job, flying at night with all the flak [anti-aircraft fire]," he says.

"The glider was a large wooden aircraft, with a wingspan bigger than our planes. The biggest gliders would have carried a tank. The gliders I towed would normally have carried troops, along with a jeep and guns. They didn't want to get onto the ground with no supporting weapons."

Before dawn on D-Day, June 6 1944, Bill's squadron towed gliders to Ouistreham, northern France. The troops he guided in helped secure Pegasus Bridge, an important target for the Allies.

"I was footloose and fancy free at the time and not particularly frightened, but we did realise the significance of what we were doing that day," he says.

The pilots had been training for the operation in secret for a year. "There were dozens of us tugging the gliders in. They were heavy, so it took us five hours. It was a very unpleasant night, quite stormy," he remembers. "As soon as the Germans spotted us, the sky lit up like fireworks with flak. There were thousands of ships below us, but I couldn't see any of them.

"Landing was fine - the weather had calmed down a bit and once we caught a flash of moonlight on the canal leading to the target area, we were able to land the gliders. Without the weight of them, we got home in half the time it took us to get there. I was back at base by 0600 having my breakfast, and we were all offered a shot of rum!"

In September 1944, Bill was involved in Operation Market Garden, the ill-fated Allied attempt to secure the Rhine crossing at Arnhem. "On the first two days I was dropping gliders carrying troops into the Arnhem area," Bill says. "On the third day I was wounded very badly. There was a lot of flak. The troops on the ground were very hard pressed. We were detailed to drop in as accurately as possible, so had to fly as low as 500ft. My plane was hit by flak. I



RAF crew photographed when Bill was recovering in hospital after his aircraft was hit by flak over Arnhem. The three remaining members of Bill's Squadron are standing on the runway, extreme left.



Bill Eames BEM.

was struck on the leg and arm, and parts of the plane were very badly damaged.

"I was not too pleased, but you have to take what comes. I kept thinking of the Battle of Waterloo when the boy turned to Wellington and said, 'By God Sir, I've lost my leg,' to which the Duke replied 'By God Sir, so you have!'"

"You have to keep going. I had a date that evening, back at camp, I had to get home." So Bill helped his crew to bring the plane home.

Bill's date didn't happen that night. While he was doing battle over France, Fay, who was later to become his wife, received a call to say that her brother had been killed at Arnhem, and she had gone home to Blackburn.

Bill spent six months in hospital in Oxford, having been mentioned in despatches for his courage. "I remember the chief surgeon coming round. I asked him if I could fly again. He replied: 'No son, we won't be asking you to fly again.' My face just dropped.

So Bill returned to active duty with 196 Squadron, flying Shorts Stirlings, dropping supplies to the resistance and taking part in

the surrender of German forces in Norway.

He later became an air traffic controller in the RAF. His medals include the 1939-45 Star, the Aircrew Europe Star with France and Germany Clasp, the Defence Medal, and the War Medal with Mentioned in Despatches oak leaf and the Legion d'Honneur, France's highest award, for his services in the liberation of France.

'My plane was hit by flak... I was not too pleased, but you have to take what comes'

Bill left the RAF in 1947, and moved to the Ministry of Civil Aviation which brought him back to Northern Ireland. He continued to serve in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, and later worked as senior air traffic controller at Belfast International Airport, before compulsory retirement aged 60.

He then became a flying instructor at the Ulster Flying Club in Newtownards, until,

aged 80, retirement was forced upon him once again. Among his former flying school students is Lord Eames (no relation), a former Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland.

Bill remains President of the Royal Air Forces Association Fermanagh Branch, and is involved in the Air Crew Association, Ulster Aviation Society and is Vice-President of the Ulster Flying Club.

His passion for flying is apparent in his Lisburn home, pictures of planes and wartime photographs adorn the walls, and model aircraft grace every surface.

David and Fay married in 1946. Fay, a parachute packer, was also awarded the Defence Medal. They have two sons, David and Peter. Sadly Fay died 26 years ago.

Bill stresses that war is not something to glorify, but to remember the sacrifice and the consequences that might have been, had the Allies lost. "It is important to remember. We lost so many people. So many of my old schoolfriends died in the war," he says.

Flight-Lieutenant Bill Eames, it was an honour...

Institution in Glenavy

The Rev Linda Cronin was instituted as incumbent of Glenavy at a service in St Aidan's Parish Church on February 16.

Linda was previously vicar of Sutton Hill and Woodside Parishes, Diocese of Hereford. She is married to Steve and they have four children and two grandchildren.

Linda was ordained in the Diocese of Carlisle in 2008. Prior to this, she was a youth and children's worker in a church in Brentford, West London, and was later finance officer in a Roman Catholic sixth form college.

She was ordained in Barrow-on-Furness, where she was curate and then vicar until 2013, and was a chaplain at an Anglican and Catholic joint high school before her move to Telford in 2015.

Linda was instituted by the Ven George Davison, then Archbishop's Commissary and Diocesan Administrator for the vacant Diocese of Connor. The preacher was the Rev Dr Andrea Russell, Anglican Tutor and Co-Director of the Centre for Continuing Ministerial Development at Queen's Foundation, Birmingham.



The Rev Linda Cronin after her institution in St Aidan's Parish Church, Glenavy.

Introduction Service in Cloughfern



The Rev Tim Close was introduced as priest-in-charge of Cloughfern Parish Church by Bishop-designate, Archdeacon George Davison, at a service on Sunday March 15. There were contributions from visiting clergy, the Rev Dr James Francis and the Rev Canon Kevin Graham.



The Rev Kathleen Brown, pictured after being awarded the MBE in 2007.

Kathleen reflects on historic ordination

On June 24, Kathleen Brown will celebrate 30 years since her ordination as a priest. A special anniversary for any cleric, but particularly poignant for Kathleen as she was one of the first women to be ordained a priest in the Church of Ireland.

On June 24 1990, the Rev Kathleen Young and the Rev Irene Templeton were in fact the first women to be ordained Anglican priests anywhere in Europe.

Kathleen is now retired and worships in St Nicholas' Parish Church, Carrickfergus. As the anniversary approaches, she shares some thoughts on that day 30 years ago.

Kathleen was brought up in St Columba's Parish, Diocese of Down and Dromore. She trained in physiotherapy and worked abroad before she and her husband Brian moved to Northern Ireland. Brian died in 1982.

Encouraged by the Rev Desmond McCreery, her rector in Knockbreda Parish, Kathleen went to Queen's University to study for a Bachelor of Divinity (BD). "For me it was a purely academic and therapeutic exercise," she recalls. "You don't have too much time to worry about your grief if you have an essay to get in."

At the age of 42, Kathleen had no expectations of ordination. But in 1985 the Church of Ireland passed legislation allowing the ordination of women to the diaconate.

"I didn't know where I stood on women's ministry myself so I had to sort my own head on that," recalls Kathleen. "My

ministry stands on the fact that it was women who went from the tomb to say that Jesus was alive. My commission is the same - to go and spread the news that Jesus is alive."

As she was considering her future, the first woman accepted for ordination, Katharine Poulton, now rector of Julianstown, Diocese of Meath and Kildare, began training in Dublin.

"Coming to the end of the summer term in my penultimate year at Queen's, I was reading Ezekiel 3. It said go to your own people, I am sending you to your own people, not people of a strange tongue or language," says Kathleen. "That was the moment I felt God was calling me to be ordained. I felt it was right to test the call. I spoke to my rector and the process began."

Following an interview with Bishop Robin Eames, she was sent for selection in Dublin. "I was of a generation that did not do interviews. You just got jobs," she says. "When I came to do the selection interview, it was a daunting thing!"

Kathleen was successful and joined Katharine in training for ordination as a permanent deacon, believing it might be 10 years before she would be priested.

She and Katharine shared accommodation with their male colleagues. "It was the best thing to happen as we were in the middle of everything that went on," recalls Kathleen.

Kathleen was 46 when she started at Theological College in 1986. The following year, Katharine was the first woman to be ordained deacon in the Church of Ireland, and in 1988, Kathleen was also ordained into a permanent deaconate for the curacy of Carrickfergus.

Irene followed a year later. "Irene was the person who fought for the ordination of women. She was up front and she worked for it. It is because of her we were ordained," says Kathleen. Sadly, Irene died just a few years after ordination.

There were murmurs that the legislation to ordain women to the priesthood was closer than originally thought. By chance, Kathleen was at the 1990 General Synod the day the motion to ordain women priests passed its third reading.

"The House of Bishops voted, something they normally did not do," Kathleen recalls. "It was not a unanimous vote. The atmosphere was quiet and serious and there was no cheering when the result was announced.

'The privilege of that [first] celebration of Communion is something I will never forget'

"I was conscious that there were friends of mine present who found it very difficult to accept the concept of women priests and I did not have any feeling of celebration. For some, their world had collapsed."

Just a few weeks later, Kathleen and Irene were ordained priests by Bishop Samuel Poyntz in a service at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. "The cathedral was packed with people from all over the world and the service passed in a bit of a blur," remembers Kathleen. "There were some very special moments.

"I also remember the interviews. The media was there from all over the world, and answering questions was not something I was good at. Fortunately, one of my cleric friends had told me to write down what I wanted to say. It was like being a film star!"

That evening, away from the glare of the media, Kathleen celebrated her first



The Rev Kathleen Young and the Rev Irene Templeton pictured at their ordination as priests on June 24 1990.

Holy Communion with parishioners in Carrickfergus. "That to me was wonderful. It was very, very special for it was a service for friends and family. The privilege of that celebration of Communion is something I will never forget." It was the first time a woman in the Anglican Church in Europe had celebrated Communion.

"People had to change their way of thinking. I had to give people time, even the clergy, to get used to the idea." Kathleen says. "The people of St Nicholas' Parish were very welcoming and supportive and gave me a chance."

After two years as curate, Kathleen was instituted rector of St Paul's and St Barnabas in Belfast in October 1990 where she remained until her retirement in 2007.

"Again, people gave me a chance. Those were 15 very happy years for me, even though we were in the midst of the Troubles. It was a time of seeing God working and his love expressed in a community which is deprived and has suffered. It was good to be part of a community which has a wonderful, generous heart, despite having experienced atrocities," she says.

The first woman in the Chapter of Belfast

Cathedral, Kathleen married the late Alfie Brown in 1998. She was awarded an MBE in June 2007 for services to the community.

Kathleen remains a member of St Nicholas' Parish, Carrickfergus, where she also helped out for a number of years after her retirement.

Paying tribute to Kathleen, the Most Rev Pat Storey, Bishop of Meath and Kildare and the first female bishop in the Church of Ireland, said: "It is a privilege to be in ministry, and thanks to the impetus of women who have gone before me, a great privilege to be a bishop who is female, and a wife and mother.

"Without the commitment, vision and vocation of women like Irene, Kathleen, Katharine and many others, we would not be celebrating 30 years of women priests. I am profoundly grateful for their leadership and I remain indebted to their perseverance. It is a solemn yet joyful vocation and it has been a delight to respond to God's call."

The Rev Katharine Poulton, the first woman ordained a deacon in the Church of Ireland, congratulated Kathleen on the 30th anniversary of her ordination to the priesthood. "We overlapped in college as we prepared for ordination," she said.

"This year I celebrate the 33rd anniversary of my ordination as a deacon and 29th as a priest. The years have flown by with ministry with and to diverse and wonderful people. It is hard to imagine the Church of Ireland without women clergy who, like the men, bring a variety of gifts to all they do."

Ballysillan Parish says farewell to Campbell

The parishioners of St Mark's, Ballysillan, said a fond farewell to the Rev Campbell Dixon MBE, who has retired as priest-in-charge, at a special service in St Mark's Parish Church.

People's churchwarden, Jack Briggs, said: "During Campbell's three years, he compiled numerous special orders of service with appropriate prayers. He was also instrumental in gaining the grant that financed the installation of a new toilet suite in our redecorated hall.

"Campbell has been active on the board of governors in Ligoniel Primary School where his input was really appreciated."

Mr Briggs added that Campbell's wife Jacqui had been 'an inspirational, enthusiastic asset.' "Their ministry has been performed as unto each one of us. We will miss them both tremendously," Mr



Jim Patterson (churchwarden), the Rev Campbell Dixon MBE, Jacqui Dixon, Jack Briggs (churchwarden), at the farewell service in St Mark's, Ballysillan.

Briggs said. He added that Campbell was a man of 'compassion, honour, reliability, integrity, sincerity, trust - a man who preaches/teaches Christ Jesus as Lord!'

Mamie Briggs presented Campbell with a gift, and Ellie Moore made a presentation to Jacqui.



Billy Smyth fixing a vehicle at the Yei Vocational Training College in South Sudan in February.

Billy fears Yei's spark of hope burning out

Billy Smyth, CMS Ireland, visited Connor's link diocese of Yei in February to continue his work supporting the development of the Diocesan Vocational Training College (VTC).

He stayed for two weeks, with the understanding that he would return in June along with a team from Lisburn Cathedral. That visit has now been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Billy said a new sense of hope was palpable in Yei. When he was there, the college took delivery of a new 10kva generator from a dealer in Kampala, purchased with support from CMSI, and Billy worked alongside VTC manager Morris to plan for the next intake of students, who were due in March.

"I arrived in Yei on a Saturday and spoke with Bishop Hilary. Later that evening, we heard that President Kiir had made a very bold political move to end the deadlock with Vice President Machar," Billy recalled. "At first Bishop Hilary thought it was fake news, as the move was so unexpected. However, time proved it was genuine, and there was suddenly a new air of optimism."

"Over the course of the following week, the South Sudanese pound gained in value against the US dollar. We wondered if South Sudan was on the threshold of a new beginning."

Billy said that at the Sunday morning service in Yei Cathedral, Bishop Hilary spoke of how President Kiir had reached out to the opposition leader in an effort to restore peace to the country. "The Bishop



Bricklaying class at Yei VTC during Billy Smyth's visit.

said it was up to each one of us to follow his example and also reach out to others to rebuild the community," Billy reported.

"Sadly, despite this optimism, the hoped-for intake of students to the VTC has been postponed due to the new threat of Covid-19," he said.

There is currently a countrywide lockdown in South Sudan, and all institutions are closed. "No training courses means no income, so sadly the instructors had to be sent home without an 80 per cent furlough or government aid of any kind," Billy said. "We pray that somehow they are able to provide for their families."

South Sudan has closed its borders with neighbouring countries, so it cannot import food. Food prices are now very high and without the ability to go out and earn an income, no matter how small, it will be very hard for people to feed their families. "The

spark of hope for peace which I saw during my visit in February is also perhaps burning out," Billy said. "We learned recently that after a few months of a lull, the insecurity has increased again in Yei River County. People are desperate, homes being attacked and travellers ambushed. Please remember Bishop Hilary and the folk of Yei in your prayers."

Bishop Hilary has expressed disappointment that the visit from the Lisburn Cathedral team has had to be postponed, as has his farewell visit to Ireland, which CMSI had been planning in conjunction with the Lambeth Conference.

CMSI has been able to send funds to help Bishop Hilary and Yei Diocese face the current challenges. The diocese launched a Covid-19 awareness and prevention programme for its communities, aiming to reach 250 families with prevention education and hygiene kits for their homes.

CMSI was able to contribute enough to provide education and hygiene resources for about 30 families - it costs around £30 per household. From Connor link parishes, CMSI sent assistance to support the diocesan community in the form of food allowances.

As Covid-19 cases rise and significant government figures have tested positive, Bishop Hilary has requested prayers for protection and peace for the people of Yei.

Anyone wishing to support Bishop Hilary and Yei Diocese to provide prevention education and hygiene stations, and food for vulnerable families, can do so by visiting <https://www.cmsireland.org/covid-19-response-appeal>.

Worldwide Convention online

The theme of Bangor Worldwide Missionary Convention, from August 21-30, is 'To the ends of the earth.' All events will be available to watch live on Bangor Worldwide's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Gary Millar will lead the weekday Bible studies at 11.30am. Gary is the Principal of Queensland Theological College in Australia and will be recording his Bible talks from Brisbane. He has chosen 'Living in the Light of His Coming,' looking at 1 Thessalonians as his theme for the week. Other guest speakers will be recording talks all over the world

For more information, visit the website www.worldwidemission.org or follow Bangor Worldwide on social media.



Men's breakfast

A Men's Breakfast was held at St Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn, on February 29. Organised by Gary McKitterick, the guest speaker was Alan McCracken who was on a 15-week placement in St Paul's. The men were joined by Councillor Alan Givan, Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. Photo: Norman Briggs

'Prayer is powerful'

Like so many initiatives, ReLENTless Prayer in north and west Belfast had to be suspended due to the restrictions in relation to the spread of coronavirus.

This was the third consecutive year Christian communities in north and west Belfast had come together during Lent in ReLENTless Prayer.

Announcing the closure of all prayer rooms on March 20, organiser Stephen Whitten, from the North Belfast Centre of Mission, said: "Let us be intentional with the time we have from the many cancelled activities and events, making space to pray and encouraging others to do the same."

"Prayer is powerful and the current crisis will create an openness to God and a need for His comfort for many people."

Central themes in the ReLENTless prayer rooms included prayer for renewal and revival of faith in north and west Belfast, peace and harmony in communities, prayer for agencies that bring hope and help to the community, for doctors and hospitals, school teachers and a new enthusiasm for education amongst parents and children.

Each organisation taking part hosted a prayer room on a set day or days throughout Lent. Many were interactive and some were simply quiet, reflective spaces. "ReLENTless Prayer is an opportunity for churches to find a new radical centre ground based on prayer from which they can develop partnerships and collaboration to create a kinder, calmer, harmonious and cohesive community," said the Rev Canon James Carson, who introduced ReLENTless to north and west Belfast.

Stephen Whitten said the area really needed prayer. "It is one of the most deprived areas in terms of social economic indicators in Northern Ireland. Suicide is a major issue," he said.

He added that many churches are



Elsie Kirkpatrick takes time to pray in the Prayer Room in Shankill Methodist Church.

declining. "Our main prayer for ReLENTless is that it is a refreshing of faith, and that churches will be further equipped to connect effectively with people."

Elsie Kirkpatrick visited the Prayer Room in Shankill Methodist Church. "It is good to come in and find a bit of peace and pray for the world in the state it's in at the moment," Elsie said.

Muriel Hughes, from St Michael's Parish Church, was also in to pray. "It encourages your faith, and the neighbourhood really needs prayer," she said.

Isaac Castle, St Andrew's Parish, visited the prayer room in St Stephen's Church, Millfield. "Prayer is good for your mind and your soul. When you come to a place like this to pray, you can see that you are not on your own."

Fr Patrick Devine, Priest in St Vincent de Paul Parish, Ligoniel, brought a group of P6 children from their Parish school to the prayer room in St Stephen's. "ReLENTless Prayer is becoming more popular and relevant and is very much needed in the north Belfast area. We genuinely want to work together," Fr Devine said.

'Cabin Fever' online Bible Club planned

Ripple Connor will be hosting a five-day holiday Bible club called 'Cabin Fever' this summer. The online club will have a science theme led by 'The Professors,' and will link into the story of Noah.

Jill Hamilton, Connor Children's Project Development Officer, said: "If you have suffered a bit of cabin fever yourself over the last weeks, you will be able to identify with the theme!"

The material will be ready for early August and will be premiered on YouTube.

Puppets help explain the coronavirus

With the help of her puppet friends, Grandad, John and Broccoli, Church Army Evangelist Karen Webb from Connect Base has put together a video for children explaining all about Covid-19.

John and his sister Broccoli can't quite understand why they can't go out and play. They know it's something to do with coronavirus, but they are a bit lost on the details. So they turn to Grandad for some help. The video can be found on YouTube - search for Ripple Connor.



Money collected during the annual Black Santa Christmas Sit-Out for charities was handed out at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on February 9. Cheques worth a total of more than £170,000 were presented to 198 charities by comedian and actor Tim McGarry at the Good Samaritans Service. Tim is pictured with Dean Stephen Forde and Cathedral sexton, Jonny Brooks, who appeared on the TV show 'The Voice.'



All Aboard Online for kids stuck at home!

In addition to making use of their parish resources during lockdown, children's leaders and families across Connor Diocese have been making use of All Aboard Online - an interactive, Bible-based teaching programme for four to 11-year-olds.

The material has been written for Ripple (Children's Ministry Connor) by Diocesan Children's Officer, Jill Hamilton, in collaboration with members of Connor Children's Council. All Aboard is a three-year programme which many churches in Connor have been using as part of their children's ministry.

"From mid-March when churches were forced to close their doors, every church

group closed too, including those involving children," said Jill. "After some thought as to how best to support churches who were eager to continue to reach out to children and families, Ripple Connor came up with the idea of All Aboard Online."

Jill said that not everything in the All Aboard programme was suitable for the new online format because many of the activities depend on children taking part in a group.

"Another consideration was to make the videos as interactive as possible so that children weren't expected to just sit and watch the whole way through, but could join in with various parts," Jill said. "However, we wanted to keep the familiar layout of the programme that children have become used to and translate it to the new format."

She said the input from members of the Children's Council had been invaluable, as members had offered ideas and advice, as well as producing and presenting the videos.

"Having a variety of faces and voices throughout is important and helps make the resource more appealing and interesting," Jill said. "It's been a steep learning curve for me, getting to grips with video editing software, but for many of our Children's Council, the skills were there already, so they were able to share their knowledge and expertise."

Working together, Jill and the Council members adapted the All Aboard material to suit the new online format - a 15 to 20 minute interactive video that children can access at home.

The videos are produced weekly and are available on Sunday mornings from 8am. The videos include introductory activities, Bible stories, quizzes, challenges, interactive games, demonstrations of crafts, prayer activities and discussions. There are also a range of activities linked to each session which can be accessed from the Ripple Connor website - www.rippleconnor.org.uk.

One of the churches using the material to stay connected with their children and families is St Stephen's in Belfast, who are using All Aboard Online as part of their 'Zoom' Sunday School. "Families join in with the session each Sunday morning and, as well as watching the All Aboard video, they interact with their leaders, play games and chat together," Jill said.

The All Aboard Online sessions will continue until the end of June. They may resume in September depending on the situation in relation to coronavirus restrictions.

Ripple Connor is also putting together plans for Cabin Fever, a diocesan online Holiday Bible Club which will take place during August. Churches will be able to use the material in a flexible way which best suits their individual context, by adapting and adding to the videos provided using their own leaders. Other churches may want to use the material as it is in its entirety.

Slippery, slithery goings on in Larne!



There were some slippery characters spotted in the Inver Hall, Parish of Larne and Inver with Glynn and Raloo, during the half term break in February! The hall was filled with children and adults getting up close and personal with reptiles and other creatures brought along by Jurassic Ark Encounters NI. The rector, the Rev David Lockhart, and his wife Beverley are pictured with a visiting snake. Photo: Jurassic Ark Encounters NI.



'Who?' is a series developed by a team of 17 and 18-year-olds from Lisburn Cathedral's youth fellowship group, Mettle.

'Who?' ran from February 7 until March 8, and is now available online. It explores four big identities of Christianity - I; Jesus; The Holy Spirit; and The Church.

Sharing thoughts on the initiative, the group said: "We wanted to see lives impacted within our church and community, particularly among young people, and thought a teaching series would be the best way to do this. What started off as a small idea escalated into something bigger.

"We took over our Saturday night youth group, Mettle, for over a month, and we provided worship, teaching, discussion and prayer ministry. We also made videos to go along with some of the sessions. Each of us had been really impacted by certain leaders as we grew up through Mettle, so we wanted to take this opportunity to inspire and encourage another age group in their walk with Christ.

LEADERSHIP

"Some of the members of the group also were a part of the Serve leadership course run by Connor Diocese, and wanted to put what they learnt into practice.

"The series was aimed at 11 to 18-year-olds. We wanted to make Mettle accessible for all, so made the series appropriate for people to invite non-Christian friends and allow them to explore the Christian faith in a deeper way.

"Coming up with the ideas and the videos took a bit of brainstorming! We thought that the best way to interact with people would be to make videos tied in with the theme we were speaking about. This also meant we could share our message about Jesus with the wider community on social media platforms.

"Thankfully we had someone in the group who knew how to make videos and he really did pull it all together. The idea of the series Who? was intended to explore further the identities in Christianity that

define us and what that really means for you and me. We wanted to take a basic concept into something deeper with opportunities to explore and ask questions.

SUCCESS

"The series was a massive success. The Holy Spirit moved in some amazing ways, impacting people's personal lives and addressing their identity issues. There were 40-50 young people there most weeks, which was beyond what we thought would happen - God was there in the middle of it all. The series didn't just impact those receiving, but all involved, bringing us closer and making our friendships stronger."

The Rev Danielle McCullough, curate of Lisburn Cathedral, said it had been 'a joy' to see some of the young people grow and flourish through the 'Who?' series.

"There was an amazing sense of the Holy Spirit moving as our young people listened, discussed, worshipped and prayed together each week. We are so thankful for the group of young leaders behind the series," Danielle said. "They were responsible for the whole thing, designed it, planned it, wrote and delivered the talks and also created some incredible videos to go with the series.

"As a leader, it was so inspiring to watch some of them step out of their comfort zone and into leadership and teaching roles, which they took really seriously. We're looking forward to seeing how we can continue to help shape and empower them as leaders and how God will use each of them in the future. Tune into Who? online at www.lisburncathedral.org/mettle/who.

The young people involved were: Euan Cummings, Matthew Cairns, Ryan McGucken, Jack Netherton, Laura McCullough, Rachael Martin, Lucy Duckworth.

Sign up for Connor Takes the Castle

Plans are being made for the annual Diocesan Youth Weekend scheduled for September 4-6 in Castletwellan Castle.

The weekend is open to all young people aged 11 and over. Simon Henry from CIYD will be speaking, and there will be a host of exciting activities.

Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer, said: "The weekend is a highlight of my year, and it's a joy seeing the young people share in exploring faith together. For the second year, we have our VIP access for the first young person from each parish to apply, which will provide them with some exclusive goodies and special treats throughout the weekend."

The weekend costs £50 if booked before Friday June 26. After this date, it is £60 per person. No money will be requested when completing the application, and updates about the event under the current circumstances will be issued regularly.

Right Now resource

Engage Connor Youth has been developing its new youth resource called Right Now. There are now six sessions available to be used by leaders with their young people in parishes across Connor. Right Now features quality videos, with leaders, clergy and young people sharing about their faith during this time.

If you would like to receive access to the resource, please email Christina on christinabaillie@connordiocese.org

Celebrating leaders

Engage Connor Youth has launched Celebrate, a new initiative to celebrate and encourage those doing youth ministry across the diocese. This is for volunteers, uniformed organisation leaders and clergy.

Youth Officer, Christina Baillie, said: "The purpose of Celebrate is to celebrate our leaders, encouraging them in how they are serving with young people and celebrating the God we serve together."

Streetreach Online

Streetreach 2020 will take place online. This free event has been planned by the Engage Connor Youth team and will be available to all young people who have finished Year 8 and up. During the event, there will be daily videos shared on Engage Connor Youth Facebook and Instagram, as well as outreach activities for young people and an opportunity to connect each evening with others.



Peri's mum Margaret with Peri as a baby.

Search for a grave has a happy ending

A search for an unmarked grave in Connor Diocese, involving the parishes of Magheragall and Carnmoney, was rewarded with a very poignant outcome.

The week before lockdown, the Rev Carol Harvey, curate of Carnmoney Parish, received a telephone call from the Rev Nicholas Dark, rector of Magheragall Parish, who had been contacted by 84-year-old Peri Mundell. Peri had been searching for her mother's grave for many years without success.

Determined not to give up, Peri discovered an old death notice for her mum (1938) and on either side of that notice were deaths in Magheragall Parish. So she contacted Nicholas, who, touched by the story, began an investigation which led Peri to Carnmoney Parish Church.

"Through the ingenuity of our sexton, Harry Hamilton, and cemetery expert, Maurice Atkinson, the grave - which is unmarked - was found, and plans are underway for the re-registering of the grave so Peri can legally take responsibility for it. She intends to have a memorial plaque made and mounted," Carol said.

"I am now in regular contact with Peri. She doubts that she will be able to make this journey herself, but her niece, who will now take ownership of the grave, will be able to do that on her behalf. I am very happy to have a new pen-friend in Peri, who has sent her very best wishes to the parish and especially to Harry and Maurice who have been instrumental in progressing her wishes."



Peri Mundell.

Carol suggested to Peri that she would like to put together an article for the Carnmoney parish magazine as a form of tribute for her mum who she feels was abandoned in Carnmoney cemetery.

Peri has written the following story:

"My mother, Mrs Margaret Gwyther, née Duffield, was born in Halifax Nova Scotia, on October 28 1897, into an army family, my grandfather being stationed in Canada at the time in the 4th battalion Leinster regiment.

"My grandparents met in Calcutta where my grandmother was born. They married when granny was 17 and he was 27, and had nine children in all, although only six

survived, three sons and three daughters. My mother was the middle girl.

"As a family, they were stationed around the Caribbean, their last posting being Barbados, where my grandma was happiest! As it was necessary to get the girls educated, they came home to Maryborough in Queen's County (renamed Portlaoise in Co Laois in 1929) and lived there very comfortably until 1915-16 when they moved to Belfast.

"That is where my mother met Albert Edward Gwyther. They married in December 1927, and lived happily in 78 Shandon Park, where we were brought up in a secure and loving home. My father was employed at Harland and Wolff as a qualified engineer and we attended St Columba's Church.

"On February 4 1936, my brother Nigel's eighth birthday, our mother died. My sister, born by Caesarian section in the Royal Victoria Hospital, was only 10 days old, and I was two years old. Nigel remembers he was taken to the cinema by an aunt, unaware that his mother was dead.

"WW2 was looming, and my father transported my brother and myself to Colchester in Essex. I remember, aged four, war breaking out. I was frightened. The only memories of my mother I had were in the letters of condolence I found in my father's big chest. From this I gathered what a wonderful woman she was, very kind and an accomplished pianist - the music she played was also in that chest.

"My sister was legally adopted by my aunt and uncle, never living with us as a family. My father saw to it that, although we were very poor, there were masses of books and we were also taught good manners and courtesies by father. Throughout the war, my brother went to the grammar school and I was educated at the girls' high school.

"Both my brother and I happily married. My brother had a career lecturing in metallurgy, and I ended up as matron of a private hospital in Cambridge, only getting married aged 39.

"My husband Arthur died in 1998, after which I set about trying to find out where my father had buried his wife, even travelling to Belfast with my best friend to search for my mother's burial place, as there was no record of this anywhere. Margaret and I tramped around cemeteries in Belfast as directed by the City Hall - to no avail.

"Having finally asked my niece to help me find my mum's resting place before I died, she produced the information



Peri's mother with Peri's grandfather and her brothers.

about Magheragall Parish which is how I connected with the wonderful Rev Nicholas Dark, who delved into past newspapers and found the information about the burial of my grandfather in Carnmoney Parish Cemetery. I was overjoyed to discover she was buried alongside her father.

"I cannot tell you how incredibly joyful I am to have my long search resolved and couldn't be happier to know that she and my grandfather are together safely in your cemetery."

Peri went on to thank Carnmoney Parish for its help and for the care that it had taken of the grave throughout the years past and years to come.

Peri's family has a long connection with the Church of Ireland and her uncle John, who purchased the grave for his father, was himself ordained in the Church of Ireland - Trinity College - and served as a chaplain in the British Army before taking up a post as vicar of St Mary's, Onchan, on the Isle of Man.

Peri's grandfather, who served with the Leinster Regiment and the Royal Irish Rifles, began his army career as a private and retired a Lt Colonel with a distinguished record. The family home was on Cliftonville Road, and the family were faithful members of St James' Parish Church, where his funeral service was conducted, with men from the Royal Ulster Rifles carrying the coffin.

Carol said: "This is not only one amazing and touching story, but many stories, spanning many generations, continents, world and civil wars. We are so privileged to now be a part of it. Our sincere thanks go to Peri for sharing so personally with us and we wish her many more happy years, contented at last that the resting place of her mum is remembered and marked for ever."

Clergy go online for Zoom get-together

Connor clergy came together for a virtual meeting on May 7, with 58 people taking part in a Zoom conference chaired by the Archdeacon of Dalriada, the Ven Paul Dundas.

"The conference was really to touch base with clergy because we are apart at this time," said Paul. "We had hoped that 30 or 40 people might take part, so to have 58 online together was superb."

Paul introduced the meeting, and all the participants had the opportunity to say hello before Paul did a reading and shared a reflection. He reminded clergy that the Connor Development Team is available to support them and their parishes.

The conference focused on two areas, pastoral care and online service provision during the Covid-19 lockdown.

The Rev Linda Cronin, Glenavy Parish, who was just three weeks into her role as rector before the lockdown, spoke about the challenges of ringing people she had yet to get to know, commenting that everyone made a point of asking how she was and enjoyed the opportunity to chat.

The Rev Canon Jim Carson, St Stephen's and St Michael's, talked about ministry in a Belfast context, highlighting how his parishes have compiled lists of those who are online and who are not to best tailor ministry to parishioners.

On the subject of online service provision, Derek Harrington, curate of Christ Church, Lisburn, talked about sharing services online, and the new phone number which allows those who are not online to listen in to a service for the cost of a local call.

The Rev Stu Reid, curate of Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin, spoke from his own professional background in production. Stu has shared a resource to clergy looking at ministry online, managing expectations etc.



Above and below: Some of the 58 clergy who took part in the virtual meeting on May 7.



"We are encouraging people to share what they are doing. If someone is on their own in a parish, they can request someone else to do a recording for them to share. We want to encourage anyone who is struggling with online ministry to get help from someone who has more expertise," Paul said.

Connor Bishop-designate George Davison drew the meeting to a close, finishing with the Grace.

"This was a great opportunity for clergy to connect and really good use of modern technology," said Paul. "Today, many of us would have been travelling to Dublin for General Synod, so coming together was very worthwhile. We hope to do this again sometime, and also organise smaller group video conferences."

Support for youth leaders from CIYD

The Church of Ireland Youth Department has produced a resource to support youth leaders during this unique time of school closures and self-isolation.

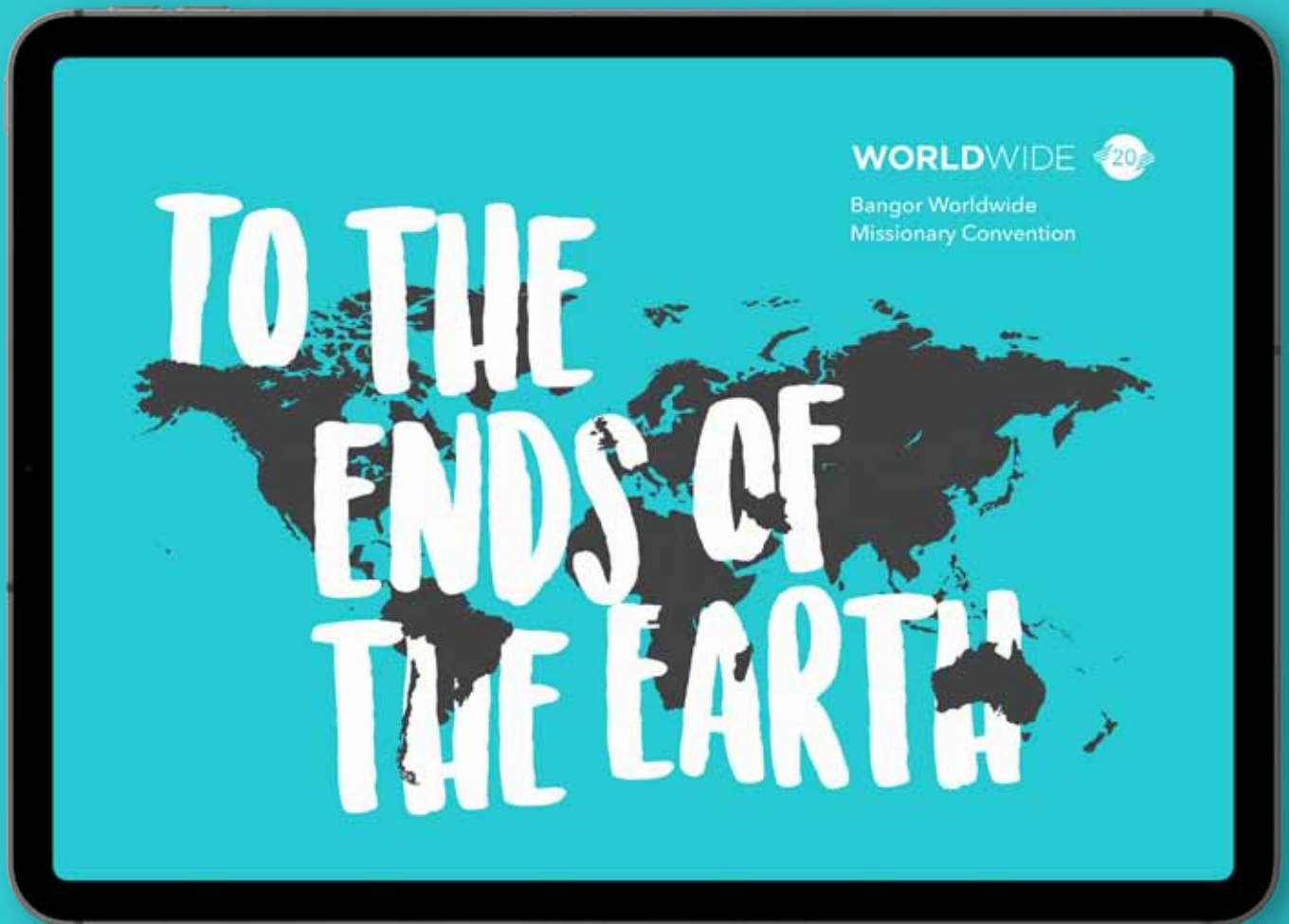
The resource will be significant as leaders continue to support young people in their discipleship over the coming months.

Simon Henry from CIYD said: "Many organisations and groups are developing

creative ways to connect and we would love as many as possible to be found in this resource. The document will be updated each week and we would love to include new ideas as we discover together how to support young people across Ireland. Many thanks to those who made this resource happen so quickly!

Download the resource on the Connor website (search for CIYD resource).

Bangor Worldwide Virtual Conference 21st - 30th August!



Be part of the UK & Ireland's biggest world mission event online. Despite the current restrictions we believe God continues to work and look forward to seeing Him move during 10 days of Bible studies, mission reports, events for kids, youth & women. Bible studies lead by Dr. Gary Millar, Principal of Queensland Theological College, Australia. Visit www.worldwide2020.org

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