

CONNOR

connections

**Bishop
George**
consecrated
at last!
pages 12-13





Connor Children's Project Development Officer Jill Hamilton and Jake the puppet bake up a storm as they demonstrate a recipe for the children to follow.

'Baking Buddies' takes the biscuit!

An imaginative project to reach children in Belfast's Lower Shankill really takes the biscuit when it comes to engaging young minds!

'Baking Buddies' is the latest activity for children and young families in the Lower Shankill area, and over a number of weeks during September, guided by videos shared on St Michael's Parish Facebook page, children of all ages cooked up some real mouth-watering treats.

On September 28, the children and their families gathered in the parish hall for a socially distanced 'Baking Buddies' celebration.

The rector, the Rev Canon James Carson, explained the thinking behind

this project, which really captured the imagination of many would-be bakers.

"This has been a good fun and learning project for the children taking part," James said. "We needed something really innovative to connect with our afterschool club families at home and 'Baking Buddies' has been a great success."

The project was funded by Belfast City Council and a donation from Tesco. St Michael's worked in partnership with Karen Webb and Stephen Whitten, Church Army Evangelists based in Connect Base,

Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission; Jill Hamilton, Connor Children's Project Development Officer; Keeva Watson from ROC (Redeeming Our Communities) NI; and the local PSNI Neighbourhood Team.

The children enjoyed the fun instructional videos made by Karen and Jill, with input from a handful of helpful puppets, which were shared on Facebook each week.

Every family taking part received a colourful baking box with all the equipment needed to make the food, and each week during September, the PSNI Neighbourhood Team delivered bags of ingredients for that week's baking challenge to the children's homes.

The children then followed the videos and recipe cards and made different buns or biscuits at home and sent in photos for publication.

At the 'Baking Buddies Celebration,' the children enjoyed a quiz, a puppet sketch by Karen and Jill, and Stephen's fun baking demo. They all received certificates and goodie bags.

One mum said: "The children have absolutely loved 'Baking Buddies,' they have learned to make different buns and biscuits and they tasted lovely! It is great for them to feel connected and be involved in St Michael's afterschool activities again."

Another commented: "I have loved having so much one-to-one fun time with my son each week and we have learned to bake together."

The team is now planning a 'Baking Buddies Christmas Special' which everyone is looking forward to.

James said: "Similar to our 'activity pack' project during lockdown, this partnership project has been church-led with the activity carried out at home and it has worked very well. Thank you to everyone involved!"



Mix it like this!



Rolling pins at the ready!



Concentration required when measuring ingredients!

Autumn 2020

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Cover photo:


The Rt Rev George Davison pictured outside St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, following his Consecration as Bishop of Connor on September 3 2020.




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

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Wonderfully meaningful



Dear Friends, as I write this message it's just over a month since I was consecrated as Bishop of Connor in a quiet service in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh. Although the circumstances were unusual in that only a few people could be physically present with me, it was a wonderfully meaningful service as Archbishop John laid hands on me and prayed for the grace of the Holy Spirit to enable me for the work that lies ahead.

It was made more meaningful knowing that many of you were able to join with us through the live broadcast on the website. I'm very grateful to Karen Bushby for organising it and to Jonathan Hull from Armagh Diocese who provided the technology to make it happen. I know that many of you appreciated their work which allowed you to share in the service. I have been overwhelmed by the kind messages of encouragement and support which I have received from parishes and individuals across the diocese.

Since then, it's been straight into the first steps of being your bishop - we've had the ordinations of deacons in St Anne's Cathedral and priests in St Patrick's, Ballymena. I've led my first service of confirmation and shared with the Rev Bobbie Moore and the people of St Aidan's, Belfast, as they gave thanks for her ministry there over the last seven years.

We've also had the Introduction of the Rev Trevor Johnston (rector of All Saints', University Street, Belfast) to also serve as curate-in-charge of St Nicholas', Belfast, in an exciting new project to care for the existing congregation there whilst seeking to build a new ministry to the people on that part of the Lisburn Road. You will read of some of these events in the pages of

this magazine.

I'm also enjoying meeting with our Connor staff team on Monday mornings. We gather (in person or online) to read the Bible together, to hear about what each of us will be doing in the week ahead and to pray for one another. It's encouraging to hear of some of the work that the team is doing to serve the parishes and communities of Connor Diocese.

It's been good too to be able to meet with people from across the diocese to hear about the life of our parishes - sometimes joys, sometimes challenges - as we share in the work of making Jesus known in our communities.

In the midst of all that, as a family we've moved house too! We are settling into a new See House near the village of Parkgate. It's a comfortable home and it is very centrally located in the diocese. I can be at any church in the diocese in less than an hour (with the exception of St Thomas', Rathlin Island!).

It's been a busy few weeks, but I'm enjoying the opportunity to serve you in this role. I look forward to meeting many more of you in the days that lie ahead.

Yours in Him,

+George

Daily prayers a boost during lockdown

At the beginning of lockdown in March, the Rev John McClure, Muckamore, Killead and Gartree, (pictured with Archdeacon Stephen McBride) and the Rev John Farr, Stoneyford, joined Archdeacon McBride and the Rev Peter Blake of All Saints', Antrim, to livestream Morning Prayer each Monday to Friday at 9am.



This proved a real boost for parishioners and many others who tuned in. Irene and Neil Paget from Muckamore said it had become part of their morning routine. "We have enjoyed every minute of it, including the light-hearted banter," Irene said.

John and Paddy Wallace from Antrim Parish commented: "They became so much part of our day."

Once parochial and pastoral activities and worship in church resumed, it was no longer possible to

staff the daily services.

"However, given the need for a variety of ways of participating in worship, especially online for those not ready to return to church, perhaps this ministry is something that can be continued with clergy across the diocese who can livestream, contributing to a daily service of Morning Prayer," said Archdeacon McBride.

THIS IS CREATION CARE



Dr Jonny Hanson with one of Jubilee Farm's young residents.

There is something very satisfying about watching a large sow bury her nose into the ground, tossing grass sods aside and digging determinedly with her snout until she gets a grip on a root.

She raises her head and, if her eyes were not completely hidden by her ears, I am sure I would read not only satisfaction in them, but a deep sense of contentment. Daisy is a happy sow.

Who could blame her? The field she is kindly preparing for the plough is on top of a windswept hill. Below, green fields fall away towards Larne Lough. The bracing air is deliciously fresh, there is no fear of falling foul of social distancing rules here at Jubilee Farm.

Located above the village of Glynn, Jubilee, a Christian Creation Care Organisation, is run by its founder, Dr Jonny Hanson, supported by a management committee and a team of volunteers.

Early in 2020, Jubilee launched a church partnership pilot programme, aiming to give churches the opportunity to establish and deepen their capacity to care for creation, both locally and globally.

Defining creation care as 'environmental and agricultural stewardship that incorporates flourishing, fairness, welfare and wellbeing,' Jubilee's mission is to practice and promote care farming, community-supported agriculture (CSA), and conservation education and engagement in a manner which inspires change within local churches and communities to care for creation.

Jubilee Farm is the first community-owned farm in Northern Ireland, Jubilee having raised more than £300,000 from 155 member-owners, including churches, to purchase and equip the farm.

A father of three young children, Jonny is married to Paula, and attends the Church of the Nazarene. He grew up in

a Presbyterian manse in Co Monaghan, before spending his teenage years in Malawi. "It is a country full of history, wildlife, year-round sunshine, but also grinding poverty, and it was there I became interested in how to reconcile meeting people's physical needs with agricultural and environmental stewardship," Jonny says. "Jubilee brings together a lot of aspects of my upbringing."

There are around 30 care, or social, farms in Northern Ireland, but most are family farms, whereas Jubilee is community owned. "The project was my idea. From a young age I wanted to farm, but I was also interested in conservation and wanted to do the two together," Jonny says.

At the end of 2013, Jonny, whose primary degree is in History, was doing a PhD on snow leopard conservation in Cambridge when, for health reasons, he and his family had to come back to Northern Ireland.

"I worked in nature education at the Ulster Museum, and also worked for Christian Aid for two years. I have a Master's Degree in Sustainability and Business Management," Jonny says.

It seems something of a leap from history to snow leopards.

"Studying history, you learn the skill of looking at the big picture, which is something you don't get from a science experiment, and that is a big bonus," he explains. "It is not just about cells and organisations as they exist in the world, but how they are influenced by culture, religion, etc. We have to understand the different forces in action."

"When I returned from Cambridge, I thought it would be a good time to start



The Jenkinses bid you welcome.

preparing for my dream of farming with a focus on conservation." And so Jonny set the wheels in motion for what was to become the Jubilee Christian Creation Care Organisation.

"I ran consultation meetings, and wrote a vision document which led to the creation of a steering group and that became the organisation which was established in 2017," Jonny explains. "Behind what people see here are years of deep thinking, planning and also relationship building - that is what has facilitated this rapid growth. It is very much a team effort."

Jubilee began life in a small walled garden in Larne - then the farm outside Glynn came on the market. Future plans include providing a barn - at present polytunnels are used for not only growing vegetables, but for storing equipment and, over the coming winter months, livestock.

The farm employs a market gardener, who is assisted by volunteers and interns. Each week, more than 20 boxes of fresh vegetables are delivered to local households. "Straight out of the ground with slugs still on them," jokes Jonny.

The CSA concept is not about selling a sausage or a lettuce at a time. People sign up for a quarter pig, or to receive a regular vegetable box for a season. Since Covid-19, Jonny says a lot more people have been looking for locally bred or grown produce, and so sales have been high. Jubilee has also begun to experiment with selling sausages, burgers and now bacon to those who don't want to go 'the whole hog' by purchasing an entire quarter pig.

The concept of community is very strong at Jubilee Farm. "We hold member days and organised a celebration service to launch the farm. We ran a poetry competition with a reading, and we have a poet and artist-in-residence, with drawings sold to raise funds," Jonny explains. "This shows that the project is not just about science and numbers, but it is about words and pictures. It is about looking after our world."

Among the farm's supporters are volunteers from the NHS and refugees and asylum seekers. "Jubilee is interdenominational and welcomes people of different backgrounds and beliefs," Jonny explains. "We set up a pilot project with the group of refugees and asylum seekers, referred by the Presbyterian Church and funded by various parts of the

Church on the island of Ireland. Members of the group attend one day a week.”

Jonny introduces some of the farm's residents, the sows, Rachel and Daisy, and their babies, and Desmond, a large white boar and father of all the piglets!

The Jenkinses are a family of geese - Mum and Dad Jenkins have three goslings, born in April. The geese are happy grazers, and have been keeping the grass down in the polytunnels. Like the turkeys last year, the three youngest Jenkinses will be on someone's Christmas dinner table.

“Our animals produce an income. If people are going to eat meat, our mantra is to eat less meat and to eat better meat. High welfare farming means the animal has had a chance to live naturally,” Jonny explains. “It also means people buying directly from farms. The farmer gets a good price, and there is a connection between the farm and eating.”

Jeni McAughey, a parishioner of St Patrick's Parish Church, Whitehead, is Secretary of the Jubilee Board. She co-ordinates the volunteers, and also has a 'hands-on' role in the production of vegetables. She feels Jubilee Farm offers lots of opportunities for people as the country comes out of lockdown.

“There are many people who have been furloughed and are under-employed. Volunteering on the farm offers meaningful work in a safe and socially distanced manner, and volunteers are what we need to build a resilient community,” Jeni says, as a small herd of goats trots across a field towards us. “There is a real sense of community here as volunteers work together to produce something, and we all love being in the fresh air.”

Rachel, a dental receptionist, is a part-time intern. Helped by Aaron, a theology student and volunteer, she is cleaning out a goat ark. “It's quite smelly, but someone has to do it,” Rachel laughs. “Monday is my day off work, so I come here. I enjoy the fresh air and the views and just being out in nature.”

Aaron believes that churches need to



Nose covered in soil after burying for roots, this is one happy sow!

care more about creation, and Jubilee Farm gives them the opportunity to get involved.

The farm is not open for drop-in visitors, but for pre-booked group tours, although visiting was suspended during lockdown.

My tour ends back at the farmhouse. In a pen beside the gate, Annie and her seven-week-old piglets are happily tottering about on their little legs and snuffling the ground, getting plenty of attention from passers-by!

“Having the pig pen beside the road is great for community relations,” says Johnny, “people are always stopping for a chat.”

Jubilee is already picking up accolades. In October 2019, it won Social Enterprise NI's 'One to Watch' category, while Jonny received the inaugural Young Social Entrepreneur of the Year award. The organisation has also received awards at Premier Christian Radio's Love Britain and Ireland Awards and the Plunkett Foundation's Rural Community Business Awards.

Becoming part of Jubilee's church partnership programme includes receiving a creation care digest and a monthly

farm newsletter; an invitation for the church leader(s) to attend the annual clergy breakfast and farm walk; a visit for the church to or from Jubilee Farm; and opportunities to attend and participate in other Jubilee Farm events.

Jonny said: “There has never been a more critical time for churches to rediscover their mandate to look after God's wonderful world. We look forward to working with churches in Ireland on this strategic and prophetic endeavour.”

The Rev Canon Mark Taylor is rector of Whitehead and Islandmagee in Connor Diocese, the first partner churches in the programme. “It is easy for individual Christians to become involved in stewardship of the planet, but much harder as a congregation to have the same kind of involvement. We were delighted when the opportunity came to link as a congregation with Jubilee Farm,” Mark comments.

“This link is an expression of our Christian faith in our stewardship of God's creation, not as individuals but as a worshipping community of believers in Jesus Christ.”

For more information, visit www.jubilee.coop/churches.



Someone's got to do it! Rachel and Aaron cleaning out the goat ark.



So cute. Some of Annie's piglets.



The Rev Bobbie Moore following her final service in St Aidan's, Sandy Row, on September 27.

Ministry from Sandy Row to Rwanda

For most people, retirement at the age of 74 might mean sitting back, putting the feet up, and taking it easy. Not so for the Rev Bobbie Moore, who has said farewell to her friends in St Aidan's, Sandy Row, but is continuing as Mission Director of Bird of Paradise Ministries Rwanda.

Bobbie has been Mission Director of the charity, which supports elderly people in the African country, since 2015. She took on the role at the invitation of her long-time friends, Jerome and Mary Munyangaju.

Operating out of Northern Ireland, Bird of Paradise Ministries Rwanda is based in Jerome and Mary's own home in Kigali, where they care for a number of elderly residents with no place else to go.

In 2018, the charity secured a hectare of land on which it plans to build a new dedicated home for the elderly. Planning approval for the project has been sought but has yet to be granted.

It is a number of years since Bobbie visited Africa, and her dream is to be present when the first sod is cut for the foundations of this new life-transforming home.

Bobbie, who is married to the Rev Raymond Moore, priest-in-charge of St Simon's Parish Church, was ordained in the Non Stipendiary Ministry in the Diocese of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh in 2006.

"That was also the year I turned 60 and became a grandmother for the first time," says Bobbie. "Raymond was minister in Drung Group of Parishes in Kilmore, Elphin

and Ardagh at the time and I worked as his assistant while I studied and did my deacon year. We had five church buildings so it was a busy group of parishes."

Bobbie and Raymond moved to the Diocese of Melbourne in Australia in 2009, travelling on Religious Workers' Visas, valid for two years.

"My son David is an anaesthetist in Melbourne and he and his partner have two sons," says Bobbie. "Knowing we were always going to be long-distance grandparents, we took the chance to go out there while the boys were young."

In Melbourne, Bobbie and Raymond worked part-time, firstly as associate ministers in Albert Park Parish, and then as priests-in-charge of St Stephen's Parish (Bobbie) and St Clement's (Raymond).

PRECIOUS

"It was a tremendous experience. The church and culture are very different to home. We appreciated that, as well as having the time to be grandparents," Bobbie recalls. "It was a very special and precious time."

But it was only ever going to be temporary. Their son Adam, and Cora, who

live in Liverpool, had their first child when Bobbie and Raymond were in Australia, which led to a short visit back to the UK to meet the new arrival. Their daughter Emma lives in Brighton. The couple now have three grandsons and a granddaughter.

"We had sold our house before going to Australia and came back to Northern Ireland not knowing what God was calling us into or where we were going to go," reflects Bobbie. "We spent a year looking for a home and praying about what ministry God would call us to do. Then Bishop Alan [former Bishop of Connor] asked us if we would consider St Simon's and St Aidan's."

Bobbie laughs. "St Simon's in Donegall Road includes part of the area Raymond grew up in, and my mother was born and bred in the Sandy Row area. My granny lived in Blythe Street, and I remember going into the church when I was little. It is incredible that God called us to those places. The last place I would ever have imagined God taking me was back to Sandy Row!"

As priest-in-charge, Bobbie was the first female minister in St Aidan's 125-year history. "It was a lovely introduction to be able to tell them that my granny had lived in Blythe Street," Bobbie recalls.

SERMON

"I was also able to tell the parishioners that the first sermon I ever preached was in St Aidan's, 37 years earlier. I was the diocesan Mothers' Union (MU) Young Families Representative and was asked to speak at the MU enrolment service in the church. One of the parishioners found the parish magazine featuring the service. I still have it."

While she was not ordained until the age of 60, Bobbie's heart has always been for ministry and mission. She was Ireland Representative for Mid Africa Ministry (MAM) for 16 years, leaving this post in 2003. Previously known as Ruanda



A place of safety and security for Stephany, aged 100.

Mission, MAM became integrated with Church Mission Society (CMS) in 2002.

"I represented Mid Africa Ministry at the time of the Rwandan genocide in 1994," Bobbie says. "Around this time, Jerome and his wife Mary came to Northern Ireland, where Jerome worked as a Mission Resource Person for the Church of Ireland. I was responsible for his pastoral care, schedule, etc.

"Although born in Rwanda, Jerome grew up in Tanzania," says Bobbie. "We travelled together to Rwanda the year after the genocide, as representatives of the Church of Ireland.

SIGNIFICANT

"That was significant. Out of that came the 'hoe, sow and grow' project, one of the first practical aid projects in that country. Because the visit was organised locally, we went to parts of Rwanda no aid or mission agencies had gone before.

"I remember asking a bishop, 'what are your most important needs?' He looked at me and said, 'we don't have anything.'

"We met women who were making mats using grass. We told them we were aware of the awful time they were having and that we were praying for them. In response, they sang for us - 'we praise God for he has made us one.'"

It's some years since Bobbie last visited Rwanda, but Jerome and Mary, who lived in Northern Ireland for 20 years - Jerome went on to be rector of Killyleagh in Down and Dromore Diocese - did return to visit family. And what Mary witnessed on these visits led to the foundation of Bird of Paradise Ministries Rwanda.

"We have all heard the stories about street children and orphans," says Bobbie. "But Mary also saw many elderly people on the streets, and no one was talking about that.

"As she prayed about it, she sensed God asking her to do something. At the time, Jerome and Mary were building a home for themselves and they never intended to use it for anything other than that, but now they are 'house parents' to a number of older people.

The Bird of Paradise Ministries Home in Kigali took in its first elderly residents in 2011, and Jerome and Mary relocated to Kigali in 2015 to take on the responsibility of running the home. Most of the residents are women.

"They are all amazing women who suffered terribly during the genocide," says Bobbie.

The residents of the home don't have to be Christians. Bird of Paradise Ministries also assists elderly people in need in the local area, as beds in the house are limited. The new, purpose-built home, when it



A resident of the Bird of Paradise Ministries home in Kigali preparing a meal.

opens, will provide accommodation for 25 elderly people, saving them from a life of hardship on the streets of Kigali.

Jerome and Mary were due to return to Belfast for Bobbie's final service in St Aidan's on September 27, but the Covid-19 pandemic prevented that. The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, was present, and he commissioned her to continue her work with the charity.

Bird of Paradise Ministries has a shop in Downpatrick, and as Mission Director, Bobbie will be busy with all the administration it takes to run a charity, particularly in a pandemic.

She is also a trained Spiritual Director,

working with people on a one-to-one basis. "I have benefited from doing the training for this, and believe I have a gift for accompanying people on their spiritual journey," she says.

As she looks to the future, Bobbie speaks fondly of her seven years in St Aidan's. "I have left a little part of myself in most of the places I have ministered, but St Aidan's has taken the biggest chunk. They are such amazing, warm people who have made some courageous decisions for the future."

To learn more about Bird of Paradise Ministries Rwanda, visit bpmr.org.uk, or to speak to Bobbie about Spiritual Direction, call her on 07746 583470.

CMSI holds virtual conference

Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI) hosted its annual Ignite conference online this year, with almost 100 people from 12 countries coming together virtually on September 19.

After greetings from 16 different leaders from across CMSI's global family, Mission Director Jenny Smyth reflected on the Society over the past six months and introduced an update film from CMSI's Covid-19 Response Appeal.

Jenny also launched the Society's new annual theme, Voices of Hope.

Delegates took part in a series of 'DIY

Seminars,' choosing from short, pre-recorded film updates or a Zoom chat.

CMSI launched its new monthly gathering, The Prayer Room, and delegates spent time praying together in 'breakout rooms' before regathering for some final prayers.

The new Prayer Room gatherings will take place on the first Wednesday of every month. For further information on CMSI's Covid-19 Response Appeal, Voices of Hope, The Prayer Room or any other aspect of the work of CMSI, visit www.cmsireland.org.

Cooking up a treat at virtual Bishop's BBQ!

As always, the Rev Canon Mark Taylor set tastebuds tingling as he cooked up a treat for the Connor Summer Madness Sub Camp Bishop's barbecue.

You may not have been able to smell the delicious Glenarm short-horned silverside roast cooked on the barbecue, but chef Mark's description of the beef and its accompaniments would have had online viewers - for this was a virtual barbecue - licking their lips!

Due to the cancellation of the annual Summer Madness Festival because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Connor Youth

Council shared a range of content on its social media pages over the weekend the festival would have been held.

Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer, said: "We were disappointed that we couldn't gather at Glenarm for the annual Diocesan Bishop's BBQ at Summer Madness, but we knew we wanted to mark the moment.

"It was great to gather online to share stories about Summer Madness over the years and remember how the Sub Camp has grown, with many diocesan visitors attending."

Christina, top left in the photo, was joined at the virtual barbecue, which was streamed live on Facebook, by (top from left) Archdeacon Paul Dundas; Bishop-designate (now Bishop) George Davison. Bottom from left: Archdeacon Stephen McBride; Canon Mark Taylor's silverside roast; and the Rev Philip Benson, Chair of the Connor Youth Council.



Ideas to make things 'possible' at this time

'Possible', a series of videos sharing work that is being done at this time to connect with young people in our parishes, can be viewed online.

Presented by Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie, the series, which began on September 11, shares stories of good practice of churches engaging with people in Covid-safe ways.

In the first video, Christina tells viewers: "I am not ignorant to the extra effort it takes to disciple young people in this season, amidst all the uncertainty, but I overwhelmingly believe it is worth it."

She speaks about the Rev Lynne Gibson, Ballymacash Parish, whose young people met over summer in the church car park to do chalk drawings, their pictures representing their experience of lockdown. "This is a really great way to open up a conversation," says Christina, adding that the activity was held outside and was 'a great way to meet and be creative.'

In 'Possible' video two, Christina talks about the Rev Andy Heber, Carnmoney Parish, who organised a Sunday night walk to get ice cream, giving young people and their leaders the opportunity to talk about lockdown, their hopes for the weeks ahead, and what they could do as a group.

Lisburn Cathedral introduced a monthly service just for young people, which Christina said was an opportunity for them to gather together while adhering to social distancing and using face coverings. The service, held in the Cathedral building in the middle of the week, means minimal cleaning is required, and the Cathedral uses online booking so organisers know how many are coming along.

"This is a really great activity for parishes to try, especially if they have noticed young people haven't been coming on Sundays,"

Christina says. "It really prioritises sharing with them about who God is and setting aside time to focus specifically on them."

In the third video, Christina talks about Glenavy Parish's weekly Zoom gathering for children, young people and families. Information is sent out in advance, so those taking part have what they need for activity, which includes a challenge and weekly Bible study.

"This is a really great idea to encourage and facilitate family ministry during this time," Christina says, adding that it can continue regardless of changes in restrictions. "It provides a consistent opportunity for families to connect with each other and share faith together."

Christina also highlights Agherton Parish, where, at the Sunday services, the Rev Malcolm Ferry encourages members to pray positively, focusing on God's plans and purpose for the place and people who live there. "This is a great way to get young people involved in living out and experiencing their faith in these days," Christina says.

The videos also identify that many parishes regularly engage with local schools, including recording assemblies, and look at examples of initiatives working with youth and small groups, in particular Belfast City Vineyard's work with Storehouse, and the 'Walk with Me' app which could help facilitate young people meeting in small groups.

Christina emphasises that examples and suggestions in the 'Possible' series all comply with the Covid-19 restrictions in place at time of recording, but may not

be appropriate in the case of heightened restrictions (see below).

- Following the Government's announcement of new restrictions across Northern Ireland on October 14, Bishop George Davison recommends parishes do not conduct any in-person children's and youth work from October 16 to November 1. Parishes are encouraged to continue to support children, young people and families at Sunday services and through online support.

Pressure, sacrifice, understanding

Young people have faced pressure to sacrifice important moments and experiences for the wellbeing of others during this time. They have missed going to school, socialising, formals and performances.

They have often done this with understanding and acceptance. There has also been pressure for young people to seek to understand how their Christian faith relates to this difficult time. Young people have experienced the need to reconcile their understanding of God with their experience of a pandemic.

This has provided a unique opportunity for youth leaders to care pastorally for and support young people in their faith. Providing our Streetreach programme online at the start of summer, we saw how young people continued to serve others and share their faith.

Youth work in parishes has adapted and we have seen innovation by youth leaders across the diocese. It has been great to allow those young people the opportunity to connect again in person, whilst other groups have been continuing to meet online for Bible Study and to check in with young people.

Youth Officer Christina Baillie, writing in the 'Church of Ireland Gazette.'

'Best birthday ever!' says Maisie (100)

It was the 'best birthday ever,' said Maisie Jameson, Church of the Epiphany, Parish of Finaghy and Upper Malone, after she celebrated turning 100 on September 13!

The Rev Louise Stewart, rector, was among those to pay a socially-distanced visit to Maisie, who lives independently at home in Finaghy, on the big day.

Maisie, along with her late husband Dick, has been a faithful member of the Church of the Epiphany for many years. Dick was a sexton and did a lot of work around the parish, and Maisie remains a loyal and involved member of the parish Mothers' Union. The couple have one daughter, Ann.

It has been an eventful year for Maisie. She moved into a nursing home for respite care following a fall early this year, and, because of lockdown, she remained there for more weeks than had been originally intended. During this time, Maisie contracted Covid-19, but was asymptomatic and has made a full recovery. She returned to her own home in April.

Louise said: "I really had to go and visit Maisie as we have been counting down the years to this big birthday. I hadn't seen her since March and she was looking great. She said it had been the best birthday she has ever had!"



Maisie Jameson celebrating her 100th birthday at her home in Finaghy.

MU launches new All Ireland website

Mothers' Union (MU) launched a new All Ireland website on June 12. There is also a new All Ireland Facebook page.

MU All Ireland President is June Butler, a member of Saintfield Parish, Down and Dromore Diocese. Connor Diocesan President is Sally Cotter, Parish of Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin, Broughshane. The new website is on www.mothersunion.ie/.

Clockwise, from top left: Brenda Wilson, Margaret Richardson and Jessie McKee from St Aidan's, Belfast, preparing emergency washbags; hampers for Antrim Area Hospital made up by members of the Killead and Gartree branch; Rosalind Bloomfield and Eileen Ross, Lambeg MU, with washbags for delivery; and hearts knit with care.

Caring in lockdown

The coronavirus lockdown did not stop members of Connor Mothers' Union (MU) from continuing to support the NHS, its staff and patients.

St Aidan's Parish Church, Belfast, was one of many branches involved in this support work, with branch members preparing emergency washbags for the Belfast Trust hospitals.

The branches of St Mark's, Ballysillan, and St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, pooled resources to send washbags and other items, through the Belfast Trust, to the Mater Hospital. St Mark's, with the help of the congregation, also sent washbags to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Antrim Hospital for relatives who have unexpectedly had to spend the night with seriously ill patients.

Killead, Gartree and St Jude's branches joined with the Lisburn/Belfast NI Scrub Group to prepare and sew scrub sets, bags, face masks and patient gowns. Killead and Gartree also sent food hampers to ICU and ward staff who were not allowed to leave their work stations.

In the Lisburn and Derriagh area,

it was reported that Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn, was in great need of emergency toilet bags, so again MU stepped forward.

Lambeg branch made up bags and delivered these to both Lagan Valley Hospital and the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast at the end of June with area chair, Valerie Christie, making up and delivering more bags at the end of July.

Many members across the diocese took time to knit hearts for patients, families and residents in hospitals and nursing homes.

Connor MU also continued to support families, and was pleased to back an initiative by St Michael's, Belfast, and Hilden parishes to provide activity packs during April, May and June to children unable to attend school.

The packs were well received by children and parents in these two parishes and proved a welcome relief to boredom during lockdown.

100 miles for cancer charity

A big well done to 13-year-old Lauren, a Connor parishioner, who raised almost £1,200 for the Teenage Cancer Trust by running an incredible 100 miles during August.

Lauren chose to raise funds for the work of the Teenage Cancer Trust because of the 'incredible' things the charity does for children with cancer in Northern Ireland.

"During lockdown, I got an insight into what kids my age with cancer go through every day," she said. "I've only been a teenager for a year and I've already had so much fun and so many experiences. I believe every teenager deserves that. The Teenage Cancer Trust works hard to ensure these young people are teenagers first and cancer patients second."

Lauren said the charity works to improve the chances of survival for young people with cancer and to improve their quality of life.

"It's been an eye-opening experience, I've met so many people who have unfortunately had to battle cancer or are currently battling cancer, and many other Christians like myself," she said.

Lauren said the support she had received for her fundraising venture had been 'unreal.' "However, seeing what these kids go through every day shows that they truly are the real heroes and everyone who donates is a hero too!" Lauren said.

"This money makes a huge difference in someone's life and can even save someone's life. I hate that some children have to go through this, but knowing the Teenage Cancer Trust is by their side makes every step worth it!"

Lauren said she had taken on some fun and challenging tasks as she clocked up the miles, including a half marathon. "I also battled through Storm Ellen!" she said. "I've run all over Ireland from Ballymoney to Tramore and it's been the best experience!"

Lauren's mum Sinead said: "We are extremely proud of Lauren's determination and the selfless way she has chosen to use her time in lockdown."



Lauren crosses the finish line on August 31 after her 100-mile fundraising run for the Teenage Cancer Trust.



San, who was rescued from China, receives a blessing from Dean Stephen Forde.

Pets on the steps!

Neither a global pandemic nor heavy rain could deter pet lovers in Belfast and beyond from attending the annual Blessing of the Pets at Belfast Cathedral.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this year's event on October 4 took a different format, and was held entirely on the steps of St Anne's Cathedral. It was nearly renamed 'Wet Pets on the Steps,' but shortly before the event got under way, the clouds cleared and rain stopped pouring down.

The Blessing of the Pets, coinciding with St Francis of Assisi Day, has been a popular fixture in the calendar at St Anne's since it was first held in 2017. While the pandemic meant the service could not go ahead as normal, the cathedral wished to fulfil its annual mission to bless our pets at this time of the year.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, and Dean's Vicar, the Rev Canon Mark Niblock, invited animal lovers along to the cathedral steps.

In recent years, around 100 pets and their owners have attended the service, and this year there was a constant stream of pets arriving for a blessing from 2pm. Some owners were regular attendees at the annual service, others were bringing their furry friends along for the first time.

In the past, the pets and their human friends have enjoyed some magnificent themed music inside the cathedral, with furry, feathered, hairy, scaled and shelled creatures all enjoying a blessing at the end. This year, there was no music, just softly spoken words of blessing bestowed on each animal individually.

Among the attendees were some cute canines whose lives had already been blessed by those who cared for



Sherry, aged 13, attended for a blessing.

them - San, with just three legs, rescued from China; and 13-year-old Sherry, a red poodle wrapped warmly in a woollen coat. Sherry spent the early part of her life imprisoned in a tiny cage until her rescue by her devoted owner.

Dean Forde said that despite Covid-19 restrictions meaning the Blessing of the Pets could not go ahead in its normal format, the cathedral wanted to recognise how significant people's pets have been to them, particularly during lockdown.

"This opportunity for thanksgiving and blessing celebrates the importance of pets and working animals in the lives of so many people in these very difficult times," said Dean Forde.

Prayer requests from Bishop Hilary of Yei



Some of the pastors receiving the assistance funded by Lisburn Cathedral which had been due to send a team to Yei last June.

The Rt Rev Hilary Abebe Luete, Bishop of Connor's partner diocese of Yei in South Sudan, has asked for prayers as he and his wife Mama Joyce have both been unwell.

Bishop Hilary and Mama Joyce remain in Arua, northern Uganda, as they were there for hospital treatment when the borders closed due to Covid-19, and they have not been able to get back to Yei.

The Bishop has expressed his frustration at being 'stuck' in Arua, as he would prefer to be in Yei in order to give leadership.

Linda Abwa, Partnership Co-ordinator, said that Mama Joyce had been unwell for the past year. "Mama Joyce's health does seem to be a little better however, so we thank God for that," Linda said. "The Bishop himself has not been feeling 100 per cent in the past few weeks and asks for prayers for improved health for both himself and Mama Joyce."

Bishop Hilary was set to retire this year, but plans have been on hold because of lockdown. He has been Bishop of Yei since 2004, having been appointed Vicar General in 2002 and assistant Bishop in 2003. The Bishop asks for prayer around his retirement and his successor as it is impossible to make solid plans at the present time.

Yei Diocese set up a task force to tackle Covid-19, working along two objectives: Preventing the spread and mitigating the impact of lockdown.

"CMSI was able to send emergency funds from our Covid appeal to help purchase water barrels and handwashing supplies, these were distributed at a training session for pastors, and one went to each community represented," Linda said. "The pastors were then able to pass on their prevention guidelines when they



Water barrels and handwashing supplies, provided by CMSI through its Covid-19 emergency appeal, were distributed at a training session for pastors in Yei.

returned to their areas."

Some of the emergency funds were also used to buy household essentials for those who were struggling during lockdown.

There was a special gift from Lisburn Cathedral as a response to the postponement of a visit by a Cathedral team to Yei which was due to take place last June.

Yei Vocational Training College was closed during lockdown earlier this year, but reopened at the beginning of September.

Linda said: "We were able to send funds to support the month-long training for those students who had almost completed their course when lockdown happened. They have now finished their training and received their certificates, although no graduation ceremony is allowed."

Linda said a total of 45 students received their course certificate. Tragically, one of the students who had started with this group passed away during lockdown.

The Principal of the College, Morris

Loguloma, said: "We would like to thank all of you for the support, most especially CMSI for their generosity in helping us complete the course in a situation when the world is going through a hard time with the coronavirus pandemic."

Linda said that inflation in South Sudan has been 'extraordinary' during lockdown and there also seemed to be a lack of dollars in the country. "This could have a devastating impact on the already very devastated economy," she said.

When the pandemic hit, South Sudan was still in the midst of a civil war. Violence has been reported throughout lockdown with incidences within Yei town. "These were not the usual skirmishes, but localised robberies and looting of shops due to the desperate food situation," Linda explained.

"Things had been looking up in January and February, but the pandemic and lockdown has made an as yet untold impact on the economy and on the lives of families."

Christian Aid fights drought in Ethiopia

Every day Mekonnen Sofar, an Ethiopian father-of-five, digs in a dry riverbed to find water for his cattle.

Elsewhere in Ethiopia, despite the drought, pregnant Kawite Koyrita, is thriving. The community pond provides water for her animals and crops.

This is the difference a donation to Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal can make.

- £53 will teach 12 farmers to grow drought-tolerant crops.
- £105 will buy three goats to give poor families an income - goats tolerate drought well.
- £500 will help build a community pond where Mekonnen can draw water for his animals and crops.

Visit www.caid.ie/ChristmasAppeal or telephone 028 9064 8133.





The Bishop-designate is presented.



The waiting is over..

Clergy who took part in the Service of Consecration of the Rt Rev George Davison as Bishop of Connor, pictured in the

The Covid-19 pandemic meant Connor Diocese had to wait longer than usual for the consecration of its new Bishop, but on September 3 the former Archdeacon of Belfast formally became the Rt Rev George Davison!

The Consecration Service took place in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, and was conducted under strict Covid-19 restrictions. There were rows of empty pews, no congregational singing, and liberal use of hand sanitiser before the individual laying-on of hands - but at last the waiting was over for the new Bishop - and the diocese.

Due to the ongoing restrictions, dates for the Bishop's Enthronement in Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn, and Installation in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, have yet to be set.

Formerly rector of Carrickfergus, Bishop George was appointed by the Episcopal Electoral College for the Diocese of Connor on February 17. His consecration had originally been planned for May, but was delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

MESSAGE

In a video message to the diocese recorded on the eve of the Service of Consecration, Bishop George said: "This is a service that has been in planning for some time, a considerable time longer than any of us had realised."

He continued: "That delay, of course, has been caused by the same coronavirus emergency that has turned all our lives upside down over the last number of months. As individuals and as a society, we face challenges that we have never had to deal with before. It has caused real heartache for many people, and for some, the challenges they have faced make the delay of a service feel very insignificant."

The Bishop said that familiar ways of doing things had to be put on hold, and churches had to learn new ways to enable people to join together as the family of God.

"Even as we take these tentative steps back into our church buildings again, I am very conscious that we still have challenges ahead of us," he said. "We have to be realistic about the challenges ahead, but I am convinced that they should not, and will not, define us."

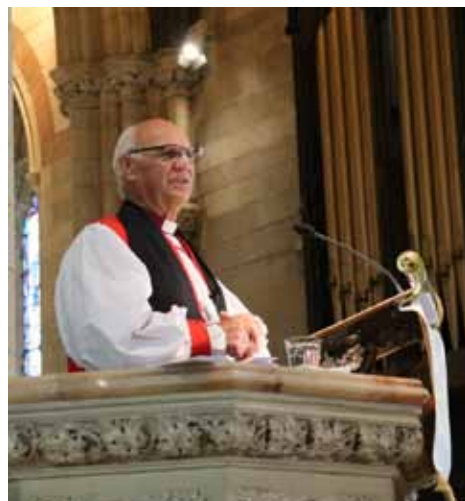
The service took place in the presence of a congregation of less than 30, when in normal circumstances several hundred would have attended. It was live-streamed on various platforms, so parishioners across Connor Diocese and beyond could follow the consecration. The service can still be watched on the diocesan YouTube Channel (via the YouTube button on on the Connor website www.connor.anglican.org).

The co-consecrators were the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev John McDowell; the Bishop of Meath and Kildare, the Most Rev Pat Storey, and the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Rev Andrew Forster. The preacher was the Rt Rev Kenneth Clarke, formerly Bishop of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh.

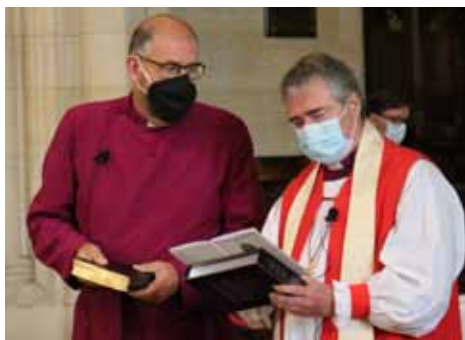
LEADERSHIP

Bishop Clarke's sermon focused on the theme of leadership and the image of Bishops as shepherds.

Bishop George succeeds the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy who retired in December 2019.



Bishop Ken Clarke delivers the sermon.



Sharing a moment. Bishop George and Archbishop McDowell.



Bishop George and Archbishop McDowell relax following the service.



Consecration of Bishop George

grounds of St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, social distancing was adhered to at all times.

Clergy wore masks or visors throughout the service, as did the congregation. Hymns were sung by cantor Adam Reaney, and the words were included in the order of service to allow the congregation to follow. The organist at the service was the Rev Canon Dr Peter Thompson, assistant organist of St Patrick's, Armagh.

At the laying-on of hands, Bishop George knelt while the Archbishop, the Bishops of Meath and Kildare, Down and Dromore, Derry and Raphoe, Bishop Clarke, and the Rev Sam McGuffin, representing the Methodist Church in Ireland, approached separately, having used hand sanitiser before they touched the Bishop's head.

PEACE

There was no hand shaking as the congregation offered peace to one another, only softly spoken words and a nod of the head, masks concealing smiles.

With such a small number present, the Communion took just a short while.

At the end of the service, the clergy moved outside for a socially distanced photograph.

Connor's new Bishop had been Archdeacon of Belfast since 2013, and was succeeded as Archdeacon by the Ven Barry Forde, Chaplain at Queen's University.

Bishop George is a former Honorary Secretary of the Church of Ireland's General Synod. A native of south Belfast, the 55-year-old studied theology at St Andrew's University, Scotland; Oak Hill College, London, and the Church of Ireland Theological College, Dublin.

He was ordained a deacon in June 1992 at a service in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, and served his curacy in St



Bishop George Davison after the Consecration Service with his wife Nadine, son James, and daughter Erin.



Christine Cahoon, St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, reads the second lesson.

Mark's Parish, Portadown.

In 1995, Bishop Davison was appointed rector of the Parish of Kinawley and Holy Trinity, Derrylin, Co Fermanagh, in the Diocese of Kilmore, 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.

Bishop Davison is married to Nadine, and they have two grown-up children, Erin and James.



The Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor.



Pictured at St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, before the Service of Ordination of Deacons in Connor Diocese on September 13 are, from left: Brendan O'Loan; the Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast, preacher; Janet Spence; Alan McCracken; the Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast; the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor; Andrea Cotter; the Rev Canon William Taggart, Registrar; Nathan Ervine and Sarah Crawford.

Six new deacons were ordained in Connor Diocese at a service in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on September 13.

Two, Brendan O'Loan, ordained for St Patrick's, Jordanstown, and Janet Spence, ordained for St Stephen's and St Luke's and the Parish of St Michael, Belfast, will serve in the Ordained Local Ministry; while Sarah Crawford was ordained for the Parish of Derryvolgie; Andrea Cotter for the Parish of Skerry, Rathcavan and Newtowncrommelin; Nathan Ervine for the Parish of Magheragall; and Alan McCracken for the United Parish of Ballynure and Ballyeaston.

The service was conducted under strict Covid-19 guidelines. All those in attendance were temperature tested and everyone, including clergy, wore face coverings or visors unless exempt. There was no congregational singing, although hymns and anthems were sung by the Cathedral Choir, socially distanced in the choir stalls and conducted by Director of Music, Matthew Owens. Bishop George used hand sanitiser between the laying-on of hands with each candidate, and the sign of the peace was spoken only.

The preacher at the service was the Ven Barry Forde, Chaplain at Queen's University Belfast, and Archdeacon of Belfast.

We invited the new deacons to tell us a bit about themselves and what inspired them to their ministry in the Church of Ireland.

The Rev Andrea Cotter

I attend St Patrick's in Ballymena. I was baptised in Lisburn Cathedral and had my faith nurtured in St Polycarp's Parish, where I married Richard.

I have a primary degree in Modern History and Politics from Queen's University Belfast, and a Post Graduate Certificate of



Education in Politics. For the last 16 years, I have been working in First Trust Bank and am currently on a career break to pursue ordination.

In a sense, I have always known that this is the path God has set out for me. For years, that sense of vocation was niggling away at the back of my mind and when I married and moved to Ballymena, I felt that sense of calling more strongly.

When Richard became Churchwarden in 2016, that sense of knowing became clearer and I knew it was the right time to test my vocation, so I enrolled on the Church of Ireland Theological Institute Foundation Course.

I have always gone into this process of discernment with an open mind. If this is what God has planned for me, then when I pushed the door it would open. That has indeed been the case: I completed the Foundation Course, was successful at selection and in September 2018 found myself enrolled on the Full-Time MTh programme at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

During these last two years, I have felt God's presence more acutely than ever before. It has been wonderful to be able to spend time studying and learning more of God's Word, along with learning from the example of others. There have been many opportunities to learn and to grow during my studies and I have found it has been a real process of discernment and self-discovery.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside people whom I would never have known. I have loved the experience that the course has given me to be able to meet, chat, worship and pray alongside parishioners whilst on placements in Muckamore, Killead and Gartree; All Saints', Antrim, and Carrigrohane in Cork.

I feel excited and privileged to begin my deacon year in Broughshane Parish. I sense that community is a big part of life in Broughshane. I hope that I can put all the lessons of the last two years into practice and am excited to experience and learn even more.

I am passionate about hospitality in our churches. I want to encourage all those I meet to find joy in all that God has provided for them and encourage them to use the talents and skills that God has equipped them with to promote the gospel message. I am also looking forward to working on my dissertation as I reflect on how the Church of Ireland marriage services can aid mission today.

The Rev Sarah Crawford

I was born in Lisburn and have lived there most of my life. I was baptised in Lambeg Parish and made a decision to follow Jesus at the age of six. At such a young age it didn't mean that much to me, until at age 13, I suffered from a neurological illness, prompting me to question God and his place in my life.

I attended Belfast Bible College to study Theology. Initially, I thought I would study for two years and then go on to something else or continue to work in my part-time job as a dispensary assistant in a local pharmacy. The two years turned into three and a BA (Hons) in Theology.

During my time at Bible College, I undertook a placement as a hospital chaplain in the Belfast Trust. It was then that I felt a strong call to ordination. At first I was reluctant, but as time went on, the call became stronger and my rector, Dean Sam Wright in Lisburn Cathedral, helped me to explore aspects of ministry.

My two years at The Church of Ireland Theological Institute have been both



rewarding and challenging and I give thanks for the people from my home parish, placement rectors and close friends who have supported, encouraged, challenged and prayed for me. This year may be a little different than I'd imagined due to the ongoing pandemic; however, I'm excited to learn under the Rev James Boyd and follow the path that God has put in place for me.

The Rev Nathan Ervine

Since coming to faith when I was 19, I have been worshipping in Lisburn Cathedral, where I met my wife Grace.



Before training for ordination, I did an undergraduate Degree in Theology at the Irish Baptist College. I also worked as Youth and Families Worker in St Peter's Parish Church, Antrim Road, Belfast, in the year leading up to ordination training. Before that, I worked as a joiner.

I felt God calling me into full-time ministry a few months after coming into a personal relationship with him. During a mission trip to Poland, I witnessed around 60 young people giving their lives to Jesus, and as I stood there and watched them respond to the good news of Jesus Christ, I felt God was telling me that this was what he wanted me to do with my life.

While not knowing at the time that that call would be to ordained ministry, I spent the next couple of years exploring God's calling by getting involved in youth ministry, spending a summer doing mission in Poland, a year interning in my home church, and three years studying and training at the Irish Baptist College.

During this time of discernment, God gave me a real passion for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, seeing people coming into a personal relationship with him, and seeing people using their gifts for the work and glory of Jesus.

I am thankful to God for the opportunities over these last number of years, both at the Irish Baptist College and at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute; for the friends and family I have journeyed with; for those who have taught me and helped me grow as a disciple of Christ; for those who have prayed for and with me; and for those who have affirmed the sense of God's calling over my life to ordained ministry.

I am excited to start in Magheragall Parish and to see how God is going to move over the next year. Despite the uncertainty of how ministry will look due to Covid-19 restrictions, I am looking forward to getting to know the congregation and to ministering and sharing the good news of Jesus alongside them!

The Rev Alan McCracken

I grew up in Newtownabbey and worshipped in St John's, Whitehouse. I was a member of the Boys' Brigade, and the organisation played an important part in my young life, introducing me to the Gospels and the teaching of Christ.



As a young lad, I had my heart set on joining the army, so aged 17, I signed up with the Royal Irish Rangers. After serving my time, I returned home and married Karen. I worked as a financial consultant, and completed my Financial Planning Certificate of the Chartered Insurance Institute in London. But I missed army life, so in 2008 I re-enlisted into the Army Reserve, serving with the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Regiment.

Throughout my life, I have always had this voice in my head calling me to Christ, which I ignored until I could no longer do so. Through the support of my friends, family, clergy and my local church, I began to explore my faith more deeply. After a meeting with Bishop Alan Abernethy, and the Diocesan Director of Ordinands, I began my vocational journey.

I completed the Church of Ireland Foundation Course which led me on the journey to study for my Master's Degree in Theology at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute.

My journey of faith has been fantastic so far, with the support of my wife, my placement church rectors, the lecturers and students at the Theological Institute and my work colleagues. All have travelled with me, supporting me on the ups and downs on my journey to ordained ministry.

I am excited to be serving my Deacon Internship at the United Parish of Christ Church and St John alongside the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth. I am looking forward to getting to know everyone, getting my sleeves rolled up and getting stuck in to further the Kingdom of God.

The Rev Janet Spence

I am married to William and we have numerous nephews and nieces. I was born and bred on the Shankill Road and have been a parishioner of St Stephen's all my life. I was baptised and confirmed in the parish church.



I have been blessed by the people God has put in my life to guide and nurture my spiritual journey: Alice and Joe McGrand, George and Peggy Stewart, Tom and Susan Perry and Bobby Murray, and many more members of the congregation over the years.

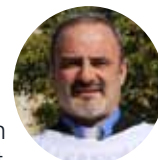
I was involved in Sunday School and

Girl Guiding, and in 2011 became a lay reader. More recently, I have worked with the Rev Canon James Carson and his wife Heather as part of the ministry team of St Stephen's/St Luke's and St Michael's, following early retirement from nursing.

I have always felt the Lord's call on my life in the Lower Shankill where I believe there is a great need for the Gospel to be shared and heard and I continue to look forward to God using me to grow his kingdom in this place.

The Rev Brendan O'Loan

Dora and I have been married for 22 years and we have three children. I was brought up as a Roman Catholic in north Belfast, but became a member of the Church of Ireland more than 20 years ago when I married; and this is where my journey towards ordination began.



The Rev John Mann (later Dean of Belfast) asked if I had ever considered becoming a minister in the Church. I had just accepted a Head of Department role at Hazelwood Integrated College in Belfast and felt that my true vocation, at this stage, lay in teaching.

It was not until recently that things dramatically changed. As a member of St John's and St Ninian's Parish, I remember listening to the Rev Elaine O'Brien's sermon on vocation and feeling that God was telling me to follow him.

The more I tried to ignore this request, the stronger I felt it. Having talked it over with my wife, the next step was to talk to John Mann and before I knew it I was sitting in front of Bishop Alan Abernethy who was praying with me that I would be able to discern God's call for me.

The process of discernment took time. Initially I had felt that the path I was called to follow was that of a full-time minister, and through a series of positive encounters I now find myself in St Patrick's, Jordanstown, as their OLM candidate.

Over the past three years, the rector, the Rev Canon Nigel Baylor, the Select Vestry and parishioners have afforded me support, valuable advice and every opportunity to get involved within the life of the parish.

The experience has been extremely positive and I consider St Patrick's to be my spiritual home.

As I take the next step towards becoming a minister, I am reminded that my path has been shaped through encounters with others and how each experience has impacted on me. It is with gladness, and a hint of anticipation, that I look forward to whatever the future holds.



Above and below: Participants in the first ever Connor Diocesan Council meeting held on Zoom.



First virtual meeting of Diocesan Council

History was made on June 11, when members of Connor Diocesan Council came together for a virtual meeting. The meeting was held via the Zoom platform with 35 members joining.

Bishop-designate (now Bishop) George Davison said the attendance was excellent. "While many folk are familiar with Zoom, for others it was their first time using this technology, and we were delighted with the engagement. It was a very useful and constructive meeting, conducted in good humour, and we got all business completed."

Diocesan Council comprises the Bishop (or Bishop-designate); archdeacons, honorary secretaries and clergy and lay people from Connor's archdeaconries.

'A Question of Faith'

'A Question of Faith,' a series of midweek talks looking at big questions and organised by St Patrick's Parish Church, Broughshane, was shared during August.

The speakers were the Rev Prof Stephen Williams, Queen's University Belfast, on Faith and Reason; the Rev Dr Ron Elsdon, former rector of St Bartholomew's, Stanmillis, on Faith and Science; the Rev Dr Peter Sanlon, Emmanuel Anglican Church, on Faith and the Bible; and Gareth Black, Solas, on Faith and Suffering.

The Rev Dr Andrew Campbell, rector of Skerry, Rathcavan, and Newtowncrommelin, said: "It's great to assemble such a great set of speakers to look at these critical issues facing Christian Faith. We hope that these talks will help people who struggle with faith and give an answer for the hope that we have."

Calls for action over church attacks

A Connor rector has added his voice to calls for additional government measures to protect places of worship.

The Rev Aaron McAlister (pictured), rector of Derriaghy Parish, was responding to a report published last month that indicates there have been more than 600 attacks on places of worship in Northern Ireland in the last five years. Derriaghy Parish Church was broken into and vandalised in November 2019.



there. Rather than getting on with serving our community, we had to spend valuable hours repairing the damage caused."

He added: "I would support additional government measures to protect places of worship. Action to prevent attacks

happening to other faith communities would be hugely welcome."

CARE NI Policy Officer, Mark Baillie, said: "Across Northern Ireland, churches and other places of worship have been attacked with alarming regularity and it makes sense, therefore, to consider introducing a security fund.

"More than 600 attacks in the last five years is a reminder that places of worship, which should be safe spaces for worshippers and congregants, are all too often targeted by vandalism and violence.

"The gradual easing of lockdown will surely only increase the opportunity and risk of further attacks and therefore it's important MLAs take action."

Mark said that last year, following CARE NI's previous research into this issue, the organisation had written to party leaders asking for a manifesto commitment to create a security fund.

"We had positive engagement with a number of political parties and we are today calling on the Northern Ireland Executive to take this up," he said.

"It is a human right for individuals to live out and practice their religious beliefs and attacks on places of worship offend against those rights.

"The scheme in England and Wales is a practical step we could introduce here to equip places of worship to invest in adequate security to prevent criminal damage.

"In a free and democratic society, no one should be afraid of gathering together with those who share their faith in a place of worship."

Since launching the report, CARE NI has met with Northern Ireland's First Minister Arlene Foster, who indicated she supports the introduction of help for churches impacted by attacks and will be looking to advance the issue through the Executive Office.

The figures were released by Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) NI, following a Freedom of Information request to the PSNI. They reveal that, since 2014/15 until the report was published, there were 601 crimes recorded as criminal damage to religious buildings, churchyards or cemeteries in Northern Ireland across the 11 policing districts.

On average, this means in the last five years an attack on a place of worship has taken place approximately every three days. Belfast City has seen the most, with 173 attacks.

When lockdown restrictions were beginning to ease and churches returned to worship services, CARE NI called on the Northern Ireland Executive to consider policies to ensure places of worship are properly protected.

The charity has previously called for a Places of Worship: Protective Security Funding Scheme to be set up, mirroring a similar scheme available in England and Wales.

Created in July 2016, the fund provides financial resources so places of worship can invest in security measures such as CCTV, fencing and lighting.

The Scottish Government has announced it is introducing a similar scheme there, leaving Northern Ireland as the only part of the United Kingdom without such a scheme.

Supporting the call, Aaron outlined the impact of the November 2019 break-in at Derriaghy. "Significant damage was caused to our vestry and our sanctuary," he said. "The individuals concerned managed to get in behind our organ while searching for valuables, but fortunately there was nothing to take.

"It left many of my parishioners deeply upset. An attack on a place of worship is an attack on the community that worships

Cabin Fever online a big success

Children across Connor Diocese leapt in with great enthusiasm to join the fun and activity of the Cabin Fever online Holiday Bible Club which ran for a week in August.

Connor Children's Project Development Officer Jill Hamilton said she was thrilled at how the online club had been received. "I think its big strength was that so many churches in the diocese were willing to get involved by sending in videos to be part of the online programme," Jill said.

"We had rectors, curates, and children's workers dressing up as professors and silly scientists, taking part in dramas and demonstrating experiments.

We had lots of our children's leaders in parishes across the diocese filming fantastic videos of prayer activities, experiments, games, and arts and crafts.

"Most exciting of all, we had our children taking part and showing how incredibly talented and capable they are and how willing they are to get involved."

There were art activities, experiments, memory verse challenges, games, prayer activities, the 'question of the day,' and the very popular puppet sketches, performed



by Karen Webb from Connect Base, and her daughter Caroline, who is an actor.

Cabin Fever was premiered from August 3-7. Some churches incorporated Zoom calls as part of their programme, which allowed them to connect with the children in their parish and introduce a 'live' interactive element to Cabin Fever.

The videos are still freely available on the Ripple Connor website and Facebook page.

Virtual Sunday Club in Broughshane

St Patrick's Parish, Broughshane, produced a video last June sharing the many reasons children of the parish tuned in weekly to the online Sunday Club.

From April, the parish had been running Sunday Club on Zoom each Sunday morning. Games, stories, quizzes, crafts, memory verses, and creative prayers were all part of the virtual gatherings, when children also caught up with friends.

The rector, the Rev Dr Andrew Campbell, said: "The lockdown has given us opportunities for mission. Sadly our Sunday Club cannot meet together physically, but the virtual meeting gives us opportunities to reach out to the children of our community. Through this short video, we wanted to draw attention to this important ministry in our church."

Zoom celebration

St Bartholomew's, Stranmillis, held its annual Service of Celebration for Children's Ministry on June 28 via Zoom.

There were action songs, readings and prayers, and a talk from the rector, the Rev Canon Kevin Graham, who awarded the children their certificates. The rector also thanked the leaders at St BSS and Tots' Church for their dedicated work.

Set for All Aboard 2!

Ripple Connor's Sunday School programme 'All Aboard' is a three-year programme that many of the Sunday Schools in Connor Diocese began using last year as their core Sunday School material.

The material is written by Jill Hamilton, Connor Children's Project Development Officer, with support from the Diocesan Children's Council.

Year one of the 'All Aboard' programme was in churches in August 2019 for the start of the academic year. 'All Aboard 2' will be ready to distribute to churches by the end of October.

Year two is a 36-week programme made up of 10 units with a range of Old and New Testament stories and is suitable for primary school aged children. It is accessible for a range of abilities including children with special educational needs. Year two includes the usual mix of Bible storytelling, quizzes and challenges, prayer activities and response activities such as games, crafts and experiments. All the stories are drawn from the 'Lion Storyteller Bible' by Bob Hartman, illustrated by Krisztina Kállai Nagy.

Each four-week unit is based around a Bible character or a group of inter-related stories and the units alternate between the Old and New Testaments. The fourth week of each month is 'Dive In' week, when children can revisit the stories they have heard that month through a range of activities.

There are six activity ideas for each 'Dive In' week, which allow the children to respond to the story in their own way. These activities will include open-ended tasks which give children a chance to make their own response to what God has been teaching them over the month. Leaders can pick and choose what activities will be suitable for their group.

This year, the situation for Sunday Schools and church-based children's groups is very different due to the coronavirus pandemic, and currently church children's groups are not permitted to meet face-to-face. For this



reason, 'All Aboard 2' material is being adapted into a 'Bitesized' format.

The leaders' notes for each week are available as an activity sheet which children and families can use together at home. There are also two short videos which tell the Bible story accompanying each activity sheet. These videos are sourced from the best of what is freely available online and also include discussion questions.

Year three of the programme is being written and will be available to churches who take part in the pilot programme when they are meeting again with their groups. Any church not yet using 'All Aboard,' but interested in finding out more should contact Jill (jillhamilton@connordiocese.org). Some copies of 'All Aboard 1' are still available and these are free to churches in Connor Diocese.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

This year is the 75th anniversary of the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade Ulster Regiment. The first Brigade companies opened in the Church of Ireland in 1893 and were organised on a diocesan basis, until 1945, when all the Ulster companies were gathered together into one formation.

Covid-19 restrictions mean activities within the CLCGB have been severely curtailed, including any anniversary celebrations.

To mark the occasion, and also recognising that 2020 saw the 75th Anniversaries for VE Day and VJ Day, **Johnny Conn**, CLCGB NI Staff Officer, has put together a booklet featuring the CLB men who gave their lives in the defence of freedom.

Here, he shares stories of some of the CLB men from Connor Diocese.



Leading Stoker **George Williamson**, Carnmoney, Newtownabbey, above, was killed on December 10 1941, aged 22. Three days after the attack on Pearl Harbour, he was on board the battlecruiser HMS Repulse when it was sunk by a Japanese attack in the South China Sea.

In November 1941, Repulse was assigned to Force Z to deter Japanese aggression against British possessions in the Far East but, along with HMS Prince of Wales, the boat was sunk while attempting to intercept landings in British Malaya.

Repulse was attacked several times, in the first attack she was hit by a bomb. In ensuing attacks, she managed to avoid 19 torpedoes and many bombs. In the last attack, she was hit by several torpedoes, listed to port and capsized with the loss of 508 crew.

Able Seaman **Stafford McKeown**, St Michael's, Belfast, was posthumously Mentioned in Despatches after participating in one of the most daring raids of the war.

Operation Chariot involved 611 men in an attack on the huge dry dock at St Nazaire on the west coast of France. It entailed crashing an obsolete warship, HMS Campbeltown, into the dock gates laden with delayed explosives to prevent the huge German battleships like the Tirpitz, sister ship of the Bismark, from undergoing repairs.

HMS Campbeltown, pictured below, and 18 other smaller gun boats, torpedo boats and motor launches crossed the English Channel under German Colours turning into the Loire Estuary for the run on the dock gates. By the time the



Germans realised, it was too late, and the Campbeltown was rammed at full speed into the dock.

However, the smaller craft - many there to bring the attackers home - were hit hard by the German defences. Motor Launch ML262, a small, high-speed vessel, had half its men killed on the run-in to the dock, including Stafford McKeown, who had only been married two weeks previously. He was killed on March 28 1942, aged 21.

Of the 611 men on the St Nazaire Raid only 228 returned home, 169 were killed and 215 became prisoners of war. There were 89 awards given for many acts of bravery, including five Victoria Crosses. When the delayed explosives blew, the dry dock was put out of service for the rest of the war. This raid has been the subject of movies and documentaries.

Private **William John Creaney**, St Aidan's, Belfast, was in the Royal Ulster Rifles, 1st Airborne Division. William was one of 16 parachutists of the Special Air Service Regiment engaged on a Special Operations Executive (SOE) duty, due to be dropped into enemy-occupied territory near the Morval Mountains in France to provide ammunition to supply local Resistance fighters in their efforts to undermine the Nazi response to the forthcoming Allied Invasion.

From 620 Squadron, the Short Stirling LJ850, known as Yorkshire Rose, was one of three Stirlings that took off from RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, on the night of June 17 1944 and was never seen again. It was a foggy night and it is believed that the aeroplane came down in a ball of flames in the English Channel. Until the Falklands War, the crash represented the worst loss of life for the SAS in an operation. William was 22.

Lt **Denis Smallman**, 7th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, pictured next column, was killed on July 8 1944, aged 26. Lt Smallman's Battalion formed part of the 59th



(Staffordshire) Division which was sent to France a few weeks after the D-Day landings. Caen had been a D-Day objective and the Division took part in Operation Charnwood, July 7-9, to wrest the city from German hands.

The Division casualty lists were so heavy after Caen - 239 dead, 1,090 wounded - and the ensuing battle for the Orne bridgehead, that there were insufficient reinforcements to preserve the battalion as a fighting unit. Its surviving members transferred to other formations. Prior to the outbreak of war, Denis was the Officer Commanding the Holy Trinity (St Bride's) CLB Company, north Belfast, and took an interest in other church matters.

Sgt **Vernon Green**, St Colman's, Dunmurry, flew with 77 Squadron. Halifax



BB238 took off from RAF Elvington just after 8pm on August 23 1943 for a night raid over Berlin. The crew of Halifax BB238 is pictured below left.

The flak and fighter defences for Berlin were formidable and on this raid Bomber Command lost 56 of the 727 aircraft sent on this operation.

BB238 was attacked by a Junkers JU88, broke in two and crashed at Görzke, south west of the target. Sgt Green was found dead, hanging partly out of his rear turret, his parachute open but his foot trapped in the turret. Two of the crew survived and became POWs; the four who were killed were buried in the Berlin War Cemetery. Vernon Green was 22 years old.

Sgt **William James Totten Brodie**, Christ Church, Lisburn, RAF Volunteer Reserve, was killed on January 30 1944, aged 21. William joined the RAF directly from the Lisburn Flight of the Air Training Corps and was based at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk.

He was a member of 622 Squadron which operated as a heavy bomber squadron, flying the Avro Lancaster Bomber ED364. William was reported missing while engaged in bombing attacks over Berlin, targeting German industry, later confirmed as killed.

Two CLB men were killed aboard the Belfast-built SS Kenbane Head, a cargo ship of the Ulster Steamship Company. Forming part of a large convoy of 38 ships, HX84, it departed Nova Scotia, Canada, on October 28 1940 bound for Liverpool, via Belfast, and carrying steel, military trucks and maize.

On November 5, the convoy scattered as it was intercepted by the German pocket battleship Admiral Scheer off Greenland. The Kenbane Head took several direct hits in its cargo holds, engine room, its funnel and rear gun platform, and sank after a blazing fire forced the crew to abandon ship. Twenty-four men were killed in the attack.

Sailor **David Allister**, St Michael's, Belfast, pictured



above, trained at Gravesend Sea School, passing out with honours, and before the war had sailed all around the world with the Merchant Service. Initially he was reported missing, but was later presumed dead, lost through enemy action. David was 20 years old.

Fireman and Trimmer **Marriot (Mart) McCaughtry**, St Barnabas', Belfast, also died on the Kenbane Head. His younger brother, and proud CLB member, Sam McCaughtry, wrote about his brother's life and experience of the encounter in a memoir entitled 'The Sinking of the Kenbane Head,' published in 1977. Marriot was aged 27.

Convoy HX84 lost five ships but would have lost several more but for the sacrifice of the crew of the HMS Jervis Bay, an armed merchant cruiser, there to protect the convoy. Although not adequate for the task, outgunned, and with no chance of survival, the Captain made straight for the Admiral Scheer to hold her fire while the convoy made good its escape. He bought the convoy a precious three hours. Captain Edward Fegen, described by author Alister MacLean as a big, tough Irishman, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

You can read about several other former members of the Church Lads' Brigade who were killed by visiting the CLCGB's history website - <https://ulsterregimentclcgb.btck.co.uk/VW2Deeds> - or in a booklet, recently published, entitled 'Deeds, Dramatic and Daring.' The booklet can be obtained by sending a small donation to cover post and packaging to Johnny Conn, 13 Green Road, Ballyclare, BT39 9AP.

News round-up...News round up...

Face coverings in churches

A statement on face coverings in churches on the island of Ireland was issued in August by the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Primates, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the President of the Methodist Church.

It said that while governments had not formally made the wearing of face coverings mandatory at services, it remained the leaders' responsibility to ensure that services of worship were safe places for all.

"It has become increasingly clear that the wearing of face coverings, in conjunction with hand washing etc, is likely to reduce the spread of coronavirus, thus helping to protect others. Their use is therefore one way in which we can evidence protection for the most vulnerable, support for our health workers, and practical love for our neighbours," the statement said.

"Following further recent consultations with public health authorities, we join with Christian church leaders all over this island in formally recommending and encouraging the use of face coverings at all services of worship, along with the ongoing maintenance of two-metre physical distancing."

The leaders acknowledged some people are exempted from the wearing of face coverings. "We also recognise that whilst it may not be appropriate for those who are leading from the front during worship, including preaching, to wear face coverings, they should at all times continue to maintain at least two-metre physical distancing from one another, and four-metre physical distancing from the front row of the congregation," the statement said.

Introduction in St Nicholas'



A Service of Introduction of the Rev Trevor Johnston, pictured with his wife Joy and family and Bishop George Davison, as curate-in-charge of St Nicholas' Church, Lisburn Road, Belfast, took place on Sunday October 4.

Trevor is also currently rector of All Saints', University Street, Belfast. He is a former Team Leader of Crosslinks Mission Agency, a former chaplain to the University of Ulster at Jordanstown and Belfast and a former curate of St Patrick's Parish, Jordanstown. He has been rector of All Saints', Belfast, since September 2014.

Trevor's appointment was announced by Bishop George in September. The appointment of the Rev Peter Blair, formerly curate-assistant at St Thomas' Anglican Church, North Sydney, Australia, as curate-assistant at All Saints', Belfast, was also announced.

Choir member honoured

Shortly before lockdown, Bassett Morwood decided to stand down from the choir of St Polycarp's, Finaghy, after an incredible 59 years' service.

When the church reopened, a presentation was made to him on behalf of the choir following a morning service. The Rev Louise Stewart, rector of Finaghy and Upper Malone, is pictured with Bassett and his wife Angela. Louise said: "Bassett's melodic tenor voice will be greatly missed from the back row of the choir stalls and a mere 'thank you' seems so inadequate after such dedication and commitment."

"Happily, Bassett's voice will now augment the congregational singing when that is permitted, so he and Angela - who has 40 years' service in the choir - can still join us together in worship as we glorify God in St Polycarp's."

St Polycarp's Director of Music, Simon Neill, described Bassett as 'a true, talented gentleman whose dedicated service to our choir has been unwavering.'

Simon recalled: "One of my fondest memories of Bassett's time in the choir was at the recording of our debut CD. He performed, with only one take, Maurice Greene's 'Thou visitest the earth' and after listening back to the cut, he still said, 'I could have done better!'"

"Bassett is modest with his stunning singing talent and he will be sorely missed from our tenor line, but I know that he has helped shape our wonderful musical heritage in St Polycarp's."



Black Santa applications invited

Dean Stephen Forde is now taking applications from charities seeking funding from Belfast Cathedral's Black Santa Appeal 2020.

The Dean has confirmed that the 44th annual sit-out on the steps of St Anne's Cathedral will go ahead in the week before Christmas, despite the current pandemic, although it may look a little different.

"We will be on the steps of the Cathedral, but we are conscious that footfall will be lower so we are planning a greater virtual presence on the internet," the Dean said.

"We will receive donations online, and our contactless card machine will be available all week, so we will be making good use of technology."

"I anticipate having Black Santa's traditional barrel with me on the steps and we will be taking necessary precautions to ensure everyone's safety in handling donations."

In light of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the Dean said that this year he would especially welcome applications from organisations supporting those who have faced the greatest impact of the Covid pandemic, including charities working in the areas of mental health, unemployment, care of the elderly, and the arts.

Application forms for the 2020 Black Santa Sit-out grants can be downloaded from the Belfast Cathedral website www.belfastcathedral.org. Closing date is November 27.

News round-up...News round up...

Derek's live-steaming!



It must be a first for Connor Diocese, in fact, it could be a first for the Church of Ireland or even the Anglican Church anywhere in the world - a clergyman broadcasting a message to his virtual followers from his bathtub!

The Rev Canon Derek Kerr, rector of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion and Antrim Rural Dean, decided to live-stream (or should that be live-steam?) while easing his joints in hot water having just walked 15 miles with the Rev Dr Alan McCann, rector of Holy Trinity, Woodburn.

The walk, on June 19, which took the two clergymen six and a half hours with a couple of short breaks, was a celebration of Derek's 30 years of ordination - and to continue his mission to raise funds to help Fields of Life fight Covid-19 in Africa.

The two clergymen, who have been close friends for many years, walked from the vicarage to Ballyscullion, Ballyscullion to Duneane, Duneane to Drummaul, and finally from Drummaul back to the vicarage.

Derek, pictured, provided video updates on Facebook along the way and mowed the grass before heading to his bath.

Introducing the video, Derek tells viewers that his is 'lounging in the bath as a final little treat before bed.' Viewers learn that Winnie-the-Pooh, Tigger, Eeyore and Piglet - part of his very extensive collection of Pooh memorabilia - have been ousted from the bath to allow the vicar to get in.

"This is the third time in 13 years I have had a bath, I've had a few showers in between you will be glad to know," Derek tells his viewers, before filling them in on the story of a lone flipper standing behind the bath.

Before closing his final video of the day, Derek said the walk had been 'great ol craic, a little sense of achievement, a little ambition fulfilled, bucket list ticked,' and thanked people for their 'kindness, fun and cheeky comments.'

Support after graffiti attack

The Rev Linda Cronin, rector of Glenavy, said she was overwhelmed by the support of the community following a graffiti attack on St Aidan's Parish Hall in September.

The slogans 'Republicans Against Drugs' and 'RAD' were dubbed on the wall of the building and also on the fence of the property. The incident was caught on CCTV.

Linda, who moved to Connor Diocese from Telford in Shropshire, was instituted as rector of Glenavy last February, just a few weeks before the Covid-19 lockdown. She said the incident had been 'most disappointing.'

"I've only been here for six months and this is my first negative experience," she said. "But we as a community in Glenavy are pulling together as we have done throughout Covid, and we won't be deterred. We'll get this cleaned up together and move on."

The attack was condemned by local Alliance councillor, David Honeyford, who said: "Linda has worked tirelessly and been a key member of the local team throughout this pandemic, working for everyone in Glenavy and the surrounding area and as a community we thank her and the parish for their help."

Linda said: "I have been overwhelmed by the support of the community from all walks of life."

Ballyclare initiative rewarded

Alderman John Smyth, Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough, presented 'Together Ballyclare' with an award from the borough in recognition for the project's community engagement during the coronavirus pandemic.

'Together Ballyclare' was created as a joint initiative involving the greater Ballyclare churches - with more than 200 volunteers - and the borough council to provide support to those isolating and shielding who were most affected by the pandemic.



The group was formed by the Rev Jonny Campbell-Smyth, rector of the United Parish of Ballyeaston and Ballynure (Ballyclare), and Michelle Purdy, Deaconess of Ballyclare Presbyterian Church.

The initiative provided services such as prescription collections, food collections, government food parcel deliveries, referrals for Foodbank, and urgent provisions for new mums.

With the help of Christina Baillie, Connor Diocesan Youth Officer, some of the StreetReach volunteers helped deliver government food parcels to the most vulnerable in Ballyclare.

Josh Campbell-Smyth, a member of St John's, Ballyclare, (pictured receiving the award from the Lord Mayor) was involved in this year's StreetReach. He was also a 'Together Ballyclare' co-ordinator, taking calls from people in need.

Jonny said: "Whilst the churches have been closed, we have seen an incredible life in God's people during these last months - something that we are definitely going to build upon."

New Lord Mayor's Chaplain



The Rev Tracey McRoberts, rector of St Matthew's, Belfast, and Mid Belfast Rural Dean, said it was a privilege to be appointed as Chaplain to the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alderman Frank McCoubrey. The appointment was marked at Belfast City Hall in the company of First Minister Arlene Foster MLA.

University chaplain is new archdeacon

The new Archdeacon of Belfast is the Ven Barry Forde, Chaplain of the Hub, the Church of Ireland Student Centre at Queen's University.

Barry succeeds the Rt Rev George Davison, who was consecrated Bishop of Connor on September 3. The 45-year-old is married to Claire and they have three children, Catherine, Sophie, and Michael.

Barry studied law at Dundee University before training to be a barrister in the Legal Institute, part of Queen's University. He practised as a barrister for three years before working for a financial services company.

He studied Theology at Trinity College Dublin from 2004-07 and successfully undertook a set of special examinations to become a Trinity College Scholar in 2006.

Barry was ordained a deacon at Christ Church Cathedral, Lisburn, in June 2007, and was ordained a priest in St James' Church, Belfast, in June the following year. In 2018, he completed a Master's in Canon Law from Cardiff University.

He said the invitation to be Archdeacon of Belfast made him feel 'privileged, humbled, fearful and hopeful.'

"I was genuinely taken aback by the invitation," he said. "It has come at a time of wider societal uncertainty that is having a profound impact on all our lives and that of the diocese, and at a time of discerning my own personal journey of vocation, but I simply asked that under God my 'yes' would be 'yes,' or my 'no' would be 'no.'

PEACE

"After much thought and prayer by myself and my wife Claire, I am delighted to have a real sense of God's peace about saying 'yes.' I've served in Connor Diocese since I was ordained, and for the past decade have ministered in the city of Belfast."

Barry said he has endeavoured to support the work of the diocese, and was 'extraordinarily grateful' for the support, under Bishop Alan, that Connor Diocese has afforded him and the work of chaplaincy. "I'm really looking forward to seeing where, under Bishop George, we go next, and to do what I can to help along the way," he said.

Reflecting in the challenges of his new role, Barry commented that Belfast has a wide range of socio-economic groups, along with cultural, political, and religious interfaces; inner city and suburban areas.

"Some communities are deep-rooted, whilst others are very transient, with one indication of this being the diverse



The Ven Barry Forde, Archdeacon of Belfast.

community of students living in the city centre," he said.

"The needs of its children, youth and young adults are self-evident given the multiple schools, universities and colleges in the city, whilst the impact of the current pandemic will be hugely challenging to its retail, commercial and social sectors for years to come.

"In the midst of all this, the people of the Church of Ireland, along with other churches, are responding in a variety of ways in their local parishes, through the ministry of chaplaincy, a centre of mission, and through the presence and role of the Cathedral at the heart of the city.

"The challenge and opportunity is to get alongside these ministries and help to encourage and shape how we 'live and move and have our being' in the city."

Barry said he was looking forward to working with Bishop George.

"As the outgoing Archdeacon of Belfast

he has left big shoes to fill!" Barry said. "Thankfully, I don't have to fill them. I can just wear my own, and be very grateful for the fact that he's in charge!"

He added that he is also looking forward to working with the Archdeacon of Connor, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, and the Archdeacon of Dalriada, the Ven Paul Dundas. "I have been full of admiration for the manner in which our three archdeacons have worked alongside one another, with and for the greater good of the diocese, throughout an extended period of episcopal vacancy," he said.

The new archdeacon will continue in his role as university chaplain, adding that the work of university chaplaincy had been significantly impacted by the pandemic and the lockdown.

"Every physical aspect of our ministry on campus closed down. Our residential centre, café and worship space. We have been building up links with the parish of St Stephen's and St Anne's Cathedral in reaching out into city centre accommodation, colleges and universities, but every university building was shut.

EXPERIENCE

"Behind all of these physical closures was the loss of the 'student experience.' Of being in lectures and tutorials, working in labs, socialising with friends, walking across a stage at graduation, planning for summer work and electives.

"I guess in March we thought we could all just 'hunker down,' get to June and pick up where we left off. That's evidently not the case."

He added: "The actual experience of being 'on campus' will change, and we have had to make decisions about a reduction in residential numbers, in our café offering, and what we can do with other churches and in university buildings.

"We can try and 'get back' to some sort of diluted version of what we were able to do before, or we can 'grow forward' and discover new ways of making disciples as we worship God, build Christian community, and reach out across our campuses. We're opting for the latter."

Bishop George said: "Through the ministry that he already offers, Barry is known and appreciated by many in Connor Diocese.

"His lively faith, warm personality and strategic mind will be a great gift to the archdeaconry and the wider diocese as we negotiate the challenges of the current times and seek to assist parishes in the task of proclaiming Jesus as the hope of the world."

There is no date yet for the installation of the new Archdeacon of Belfast.

Royal boost for Baby Basics

Baby Basics Belfast, a project established by Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission in 2017, has earned a Royal seal of approval thanks to an initiative launched on August 4 by the Duchess of Cambridge.

Located at Connect Base, Shankill Road, Baby Basics Belfast, is one of two Baby Basics in Connor Diocese - the other is run by the Parish of Ballynure and Ballyeaston in Ballyclare.

Inspired by the work of baby banks across the UK in supporting and empowering families, the Duchess of Cambridge brought together 19 British brands to donate items.

Baby Basics Belfast provides a pack of essential items for families in crisis. These are packed in a Moses basket, a baby bath, or a laundry basket, depending on the needs of the family.

The agencies who use the service are varied, and include charities working with families, homeless people and refugees; the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust; and SureStart Centres.

Donations come from churches and individuals across Greater Belfast and Connor Diocese, with knitwear donated by church craft groups.

Church Army Evangelist Karen Webb, from the North Belfast Centre of Mission, said she was delighted that initiatives like Baby Basics Belfast have been given the Royal seal of approval by the Duchess of Cambridge.

"During the Covid-19 crisis, we have seen an increase in the need to support families with babies and toddlers, especially with nappies and wipes," Karen said.

"We are very grateful to Belfast City Council who gave us a weekly grant which kept the Baby Basics' centre stocked with toiletries and nappies when churches were not able to gather and donate items as they had been doing before lockdown.

"Currently, we are averaging 24 packs a month going out to families with young children, all packed and prepared by volunteers. The help we receive because of the Duchess of Cambridge's interest in the work of Baby Banks will allow us to continue supporting the most vulnerable in our community."

Speaking as she announced the sponsorship of items by 19 UK companies, the Duchess said: "Baby banks are driven by incredible volunteers, demonstrating the power of community spirit in supporting families and coming together to raise the next generation."



Pictured before the Service of Ordination of Priests on September 20 are, from left: The Rev Louise Bowes; the Rev Anne Locke; Bishop George Davison; the Rev Adrian Bell and the Rev Heather Cooke.

New Connor priests

Four new priests were ordained for Connor Diocese by the Rt Rev George Davison on September 20 at a service in St Patrick's, Ballymena.

The Rev Heather Cooke was ordained to serve a curacy in the Parish of Carrickfergus. Heather served her deacon internship in the Parish of St Stephen, St Michael and St Luke.

Three priests were ordained to serve in the Ordained Local Ministry (OLM). The Rev Adrian Bell will serve in the Parish of St Andrew (Glencairn) and the Parish of Whiterock; the Rev Louise Bowes in the Parish of Mossley and the Rev Anne Locke in the Parish of Whitehouse and St Ninian. Guests were welcomed to the service by

the rector of Ballymena (Kilconriola) and Ballyclug, the Rev Canon Mark McConnell. The preacher was the Rev Peter Jones, Connor Warden of Readers and rector of Mossley Parish.

Masks were worn throughout the service by clergy and the well-spaced out congregation. Congregational hymns were played on the organ and followed by all present, and only bread was served at Communion. A limited number of clergy joined Bishop George in the laying-on of hands.



Clergy, board members and tutors who took part in the Down, Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Board Service of Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Service for Church music

A Service of Choral Evensong was held in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on September 27, in thanksgiving for church and cathedral organists, church musicians and the work of the Down, Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Board.

Each year, the Board invites applications for scholarships that are awarded annually.

The scheme, which is in its 30th year, helps provide and equip organists for public worship.

The preacher at the service was the Rev Julie Bell, a Minor Canon of the Cathedral.

There are currently five scholars in the third year of training, four in their second year, two in their first year, and four new scholars.



A Harvest Celebration with a difference took place in the leisure centre car park in Ballyclare, on September 27, when parishioners from across the Antrim Rural Deanery gathered in the safety of their cars to listen to the drive-in service on their car radios. The guest preacher was the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison.



Images from across the diocese

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, preparing to welcome visitors to St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, when it reopened its doors to the public on August 14. The Dean and his team invites people to stop by to discover more about this historic place of worship in the heart of the city.



Sign of the times. Coronavirus measures in place as St Patrick's Parish Church, Cairncastle, prepared to hold services in the church building again.



Mark Jamison, a Connor Lay Reader, ran 5km a day for 100 consecutive days over the summer, raising more than £2,200 for NHS Charities Together, which supports families of front-line workers within the NHS who are suffering during the Covid-19 pandemic.



An ancient Spanish Chestnut tree in the graveyard at St Patrick's Church, Cairncastle, fell during the night of June 25. It is widely believed that the tree grew on the spot where a shipwrecked Spanish sailor, who carried a chestnut in his pocket, was buried at the time of the Armada. The tree has since been removed, but its branches and trunk will be used for furniture and carvings, and will still play a part in the parish.

Richard and Janice Thompson were among a number of Christ Church, Lisburn, parishioners who clocked up the miles during lockdown in support of Richard Spratt, Fields of Life Chief Executive, who was 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. A visit by a 20-strong team from Christ Church to St Apollo School in Luwero Diocese in June had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.



The bells of St Polycarp's Church, Finaghy, were rung for the first time in three years on August 9. They had been out of action as some of the wires attaching the pull hammers to the bell mechanisms were ready to snap. Thanks to generous bequests given in remembrance of two long-time parishioners, Sallie Kenwell and Dawn McConnell, the necessary works were successfully undertaken.



Ben and Kiri who were married at St Colmanell's Church on June 11. Special permission was given for conducting the marriage outside the church. They had been due to wed in St Colmanell's on March 24, but postponed when Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced lockdown the night before their big day.