

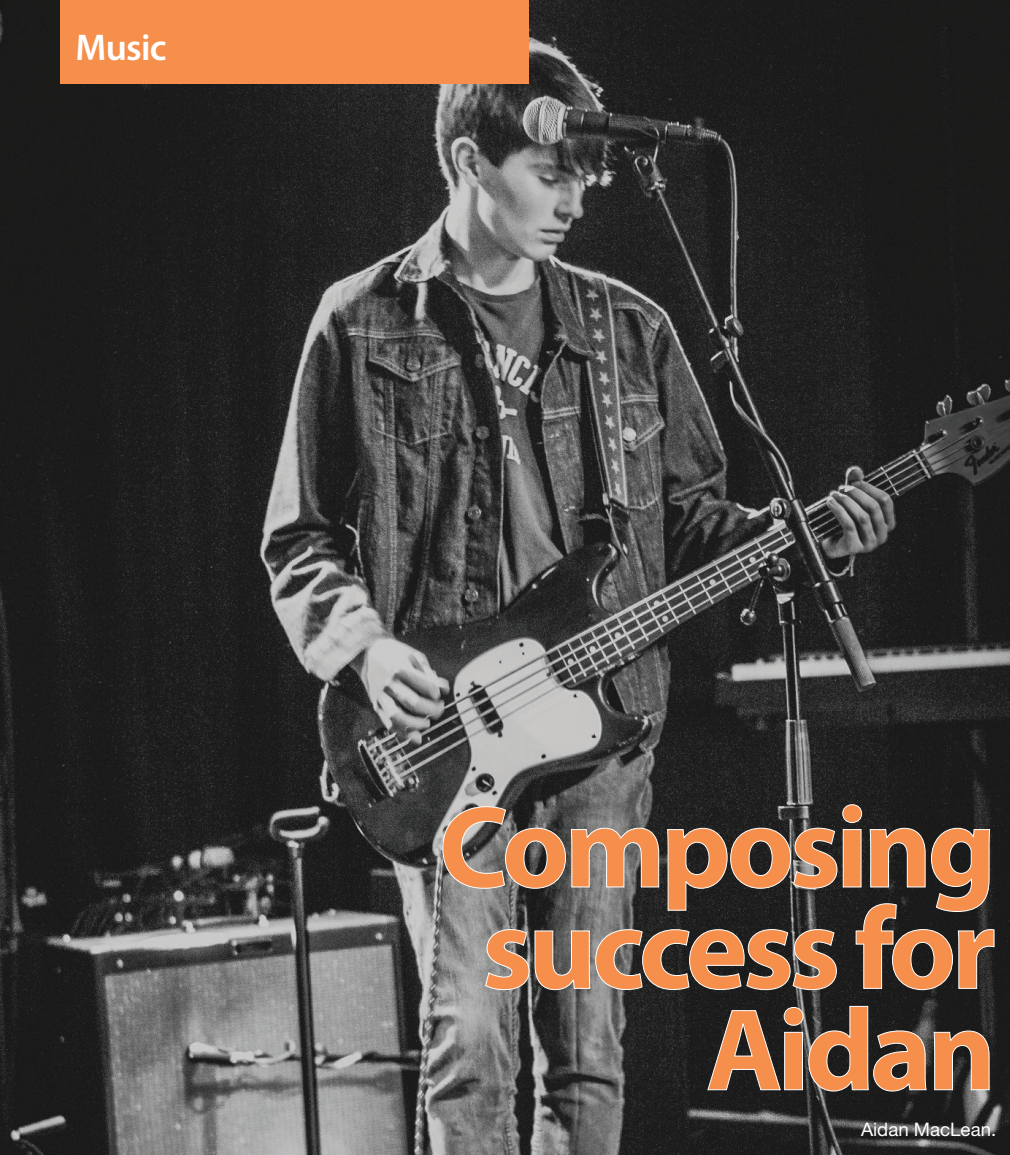
# CONNOR

## connections

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# Composing success for Aidan

Aidan MacLean.

St Polycarp's chorister Aidan MacLean has reached the final of the prestigious ORA Singers' composing competition.

The competition is open to aspiring composers in the state school sector right across the UK, and Aidan is one of 10 finalists who, along with 20 other ORA apprentices, will participate in a mentoring programme with some top names in the world of composing.

Aidan is studying at AS Level at Friends' School, Lisburn, and has been a chorister in St Polycarp's Parish Church, Finaghy, since the age of seven. But his musical interests are wide-reaching, and include being lead singer and bass guitarist in his own rock band and playing jazz trumpet!

His love of music was nurtured from an early age. "When I was little, my family would play orchestral music to put me to sleep, it was the one thing that would calm me down," Aidan said.

"When I got older, I joined St Polycarp's Choir and was also a member of Belfast Philharmonic Kids' Choir.

"I still sing with St Polycarp's when the church is open, and am now with the Belfast Philharmonic Chamber Choir. I am also a member of the Cross Border Youth

Choir conducted by Lynsey Callaghan, the Cross Border Youth Choir Composers' Club, under composer Laura Sheils, and the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland."

Aidan started playing jazz trumpet in primary school, and is now taking lessons in classical trumpet.

"I formed a rock band, Neon Apathy, three or four years ago and as we needed a bass guitarist, I taught myself bass guitar. We released our first album, 'Starless Nights,' over lockdown." The album is available on both Spotify and YouTube.

Aidan also plays acoustic guitar and has taught himself piano. He currently has classical singing lessons with Northern Ireland soprano Rebekah Coffey.

"I started composing when I was writing songs for the band. A few years ago, I did a composition course run by the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland led by composer Brian Irvine, and that's when I started choral composition and fell in love with it," he said.

"I am mostly self-taught, using music theory books and watching videos on YouTube. Over lockdown, I have been taking lessons from Paul Campbell [Belfast born conductor and arranger] on arranging and writing for an orchestra. My compositions are mostly new arrangements of folk songs."

**When I was little, the family would play orchestral music to put me to sleep**

Aidan entered the ORA Singers' competition a couple of years ago, but did not make it to the final 30. "This year, I entered a piece I had composed for my Music AS, a classical choral setting to the WB Yeats' poem, 'When You Are Old,'" he explained.

"It feels great to be selected as a finalist in this year's competition. I am over the moon, especially as I didn't get through first time round, but it was a good thing because it made me look back at how I could improve."

Aidan's mentor in the next stage of the competition is film composer Harry Escott.

Communication for the competition to date has been virtual, via Zoom and email, but Aidan is hoping that the final concert in London will go ahead in person later this year. The winner will be selected from the 10 finalists at that concert by a very high calibre panel of judges - last year's competition was judged by actor Stephen Fry and renowned English composer John Rutter.

Aidan lives in Lisburn with his parents Gillian and Bruce and younger sister Hannah, who is also a member of St Polycarp's Choir. His grandparents, the Revs Robert and Elizabeth Henderson, are retired clergy who both served in Connor Diocese.

Aidan is doing Music, Biology, Maths and Chemistry at AS Level and is hoping to study Music at university.

Announcing the competition finalists, Matthew Beale, Chief Executive of ORA Singers, said: "We have heard from so many talented and enthusiastic composers, and have been so excited by their love of creating music and desire to learn more. We are thrilled to have been able to offer them this unique opportunity, and to provide for them an experience that could help them develop professionally, socially, and creatively. We cannot wait to see where these young composers go in the future."



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## Cover photo:

Spring: 'Life that has been hidden through the winter bursts forth with new energy for a new season.' - Bishop George


Photo by Yoksel Zok on Unsplash




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

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# Easter is time of hope & new life



This time of year is often a time of hope for many people. After the long, dark evenings of the winter comes a stretch in the days and all around us are signs of new life.

Buds form on the trees, bulbs push shoots and early flowers up from the ground, and we see newborn lambs in the fields. Life that has been hidden through the winter bursts forth with new energy for a new season.

This is the first edition of 'Connor Connections' to appear in print for a little while and it is full of stories of the ways in which the life of the church in Connor Diocese has been going on through the dark days of pandemic restrictions. Evidence, if you like, of some of the ways that the parishes of Connor Diocese have been adapting and changing in order to

continue to be the body of Christ whilst the doors of our buildings have been closed for public worship.

The message of Easter is the ultimate expression of hope and new life. As we look to Jesus Christ and bear witness to his death on a cross for the sins of the world and his bursting forth from the tomb on the third day, we proclaim the resurrection hope. We celebrate the new life that Jesus gives to all who trust him!

This Easter there are signs of new hope for our communities as we begin to emerge from the restrictions that we have lived with for the past year. Our parishes will be taking first cautious steps towards meeting together again in person. Our life together has changed - it will not be exactly the same as it was a year ago - but the hope that we have in Jesus Christ is eternal and unchanging!

I'm looking forward in the weeks ahead to joining with parishes across the diocese as once again we are able to look one another in the eyes as we gather again to share in the joyful celebration of resurrection hope! May we know afresh God's blessing as we worship the risen Lord and together offer the hope that we have found in Christ to the communities that we serve.

With love in Jesus,

*+George*

## Bishop's Lent Talks

Many hundreds of viewers tuned into a series of Lent Talks delivered on Facebook by Bishop George Davison. The series, entitled 'Faith in the Tough Times,' began on Ash Wednesday and continued each Wednesday for six weeks.

Each week, the bishop looked at various aspects of how our faith sustains us, posing some questions to assist any parishes holding an online discussion group after each talk. The talks can all be viewed by clicking the YouTube icon on the diocesan website: [www.connor.anglican.org](http://www.connor.anglican.org).

## Institution in St Nicholas', Carrickfergus



The Rev Christopher St John, formerly curate-assistant in St Mark's, Dundela, was instituted as rector of St Nicholas', Carrickfergus, by his predecessor, the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor. The service on January 21 was live-streamed on the parish Facebook page. The preacher was the Ven Helene Steed, Archdeacon of Down and rector of St Mark's, Dundela.

# Hospital chaplaincy in a pandemic

*'The past year has been like nothing I have experienced before'*

By the Ven Dr Stephen McBride

I have been a chaplain for more than 30 years, working for five years in the Northern Ireland Hospice before taking up posts as chaplain in Antrim Hospital, which is an acute hospital, and as lead chaplain in Holywell Hospital, a psychiatric hospital.

Chaplaincy involves you in some of life's most joyful moments, for example, being with a family after the birth of a child and giving God's blessing. At the other end of the span of life, you may have to sit with someone who has recently received life-changing news following a terminal diagnosis, or with a family who have received a call to resuscitation following a tragic accident. You never get used to the difficult situations, but you learn how to



Archdeacon Stephen McBride in full PPE. manage and cope.

However, the past year has been like nothing I have experienced before. In the initial stages of the first lockdown, there

was not the expected rush of patients suffering from Covid-19 in Antrim Hospital and chaplains were deployed to provide a telephone counselling service for staff who were experiencing undue pressures. We had little patient contact.

I don't think I am alone in thinking that the second wave was not going to be as traumatic as the first, but how wrong I was. Chaplains received fit testing to allow us to enter wards where patients had received a positive Covid diagnosis. You can see from the photograph that we are now getting to be more proficient in 'donning' and 'doffing' PPE which is essential in protecting patients and staff from transmitting or receiving infections.

The heat generated when wearing a gown, apron, hairnet, visor and mask as well as double gloves and boots for a three-hour shift is close to being unbearable, but that is what many of our hospital staff have to do every day.

Although communication is difficult, there

*'The importance of bereavement support'*

By the Rev Rosie Morton

I am currently part of a Bereavement Support Team based at the Mater Hospital, set up in February 2020 by Heather Russell, Belfast Trust Bereavement Co-ordinator.

We are known as the 'Rainbow Team' and are multi-disciplinary, with a social worker, mental health nurses, acute care nurses and a chaplain. We assessed the support we could offer and written records required and then trained as a team to offer phone support, with the service starting in March 2020.

We are a phone support service and make up to three phone calls to the next of kin. The first call aims to be within 48 hours of the death of a loved one; the second a month later; and the third three months after the bereavement. Referrals come from Belfast Trust Hospitals, Home Care and Nursing/Residential Homes.

We provide a listening ear, post out information booklets and can signpost people to other services such as Cruse tele-befriending service, set up



The Rev Rosie Morton, left, and the 'Rainbow Team.'

specifically in response to Covid-19, with no waiting list. We are not a counselling service, nor do we provide longer term support or legal/ financial or any other advice.

Importantly, we offer support to those whose loved ones have died of whatever cause. This acknowledges that regardless of whether someone dies from Covid-19 or not, the restrictions have greatly impacted practicalities such as registering a death, how funerals can happen and have also affected social support.

Calls to those who are experiencing

multiple bereavements can be particularly challenging. One daughter whose mother had died told me - 'this Covid is wiping out my family as my brother has also died and I have just come out of hospital.'

There are also heart-warming calls. A daughter whose father had died in a nursing home was full of praise for the care he had received. When we receive calls such as this, we send thank you cards to the team providing the care.

There are funny stories too. A daughter clearing out her mother's home found it hilarious when she discovered six pairs of new slippers in her wardrobe!



is a great sense of professionalism and teamwork as staff support each other and work for their patients. Most of us enjoy time off to recharge our batteries, but many of the staff have had little time off the wards and are working so commendably. Great numbers of bereavements and dealing with younger patients during the current wave have been so difficult for staff, and ensuring their emotional well-being in the coming months has to be a priority.

During this time of pandemic, hospital has been a frightening place for patients, many of whom are worried that they may pick up an infection while on a ward. Alongside that, having to cope with restricted visiting and for some time, no visitors at all, has been especially trying.

As a chaplain, I am very aware of what a different place a hospital is at the moment for both patients and staff and I am in awe of both. I don't know how I would cope if my health deteriorated to such an extent that I had to be admitted for treatment - I would probably be very worried.

I do know I would be on the receiving end of first class treatment, from first class professionals who deserve our greatest respect and ongoing prayerful support.

We decided this work could not happen from home for a number of reasons, such as the need to debrief after some calls and at times needing other professionals' advice on how best to support families. As a result, team morale continues to be upbeat.

The Belfast Trust has realised the importance of bereavement support and the Service will be continued beyond the Covid pandemic.

I am also involved in a Research Study with the European Research Institute for Chaplains in Healthcare, and am part of a small team researching 'How is Covid impacting bereavement and spiritual well-being?'

Belfast is one of five study sites along with Republic of Ireland, England, Belgium and The Netherlands, and the study will begin in early spring this year.

From March 2020 - mid January 2021, the Bereavement Support Team supported:

- Community referrals from home care or Nursing Homes – 130 families
- Musgrave Park Hospital – 16 families
- Royal Victoria Hospital – 722 families



Sanna Mallon.

## ***'Exhausted NHS staff deliver the gift of loving care amidst this horror'***

**By Sanna Mallon**

I continue to thank God for the strength and support to minister in the biggest hospital in Northern Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am employed as a member of staff in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and work in the Royal Group and Musgrave Park Hospitals as the sole Church of Ireland chaplain. I have witnessed the pain and grief which has engulfed the wards over this past year.

We in the hospitals have endured a lockdown which was predicted to last a matter of months, yet continues to hold our caring services captive. We are all exhausted and every morning we ask God to hold us all safe another day.

I am fortunate to have united, interdenominational team support and, together in the Chaplaincy Department, we have seen so much alongside our colleagues in patient care and pray that, by the Grace of God, we all come through this.

It is heartbreaking to minister to patients, isolated from home and a social network

which includes church, denied the respite of family presence during their hospital stay. Most are anxious and, because of their increased vulnerability, are often fearful of what their stay in hospital will bring. I ask you to remember them in your prayers.

I now arrive into work for 8am in mask and visor, which makes interaction with staff and patients so very difficult. We all spend the whole working day using PPE. As I write, most wards are now, sadly, Red Zones and the chaplain observes the same strict access rules as the nursing staff.

My nursing and ancillary staff colleagues are increasingly concerned at how long we can maintain this workload, with no sign of relief. Nevertheless, exhausted NHS staff deliver the gift of loving care amidst this horror.

I felt so humbled and very grateful to be one of the first in Northern Ireland to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech jab. I ask you to pray for me and all who work as staff and chaplains in the acute hospitals, where the battle to contain the virus will be won.





Gareth McAuley and Bronagh O'Connell, who have lost loved ones during the Covid-19 pandemic, with Dean Stephen Forde at the launch of Belfast Cathedral's Lives Reflected initiative.

# Space to remember

Taking its lead from St Paul's Cathedral, London, Belfast Cathedral is offering a platform to all those who have been bereaved during Covid-19.

Lives Reflected was launched last November, and gives members of the public a space to pay their tribute to friends and loved ones in an online book of commemoration.

The initiative is dedicated to reflecting on the lives, memories, sacrifices and efforts of everyone affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in the community.

People can upload their tribute to the Lives Reflected website as well as real-life stories to inspire positive messages of love, hope and kindness and to celebrate life going forward.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, said: "This initiative is to help people celebrate the lives of those who are special, whether reflecting on lives lost in our communities since the start of the current pandemic, or giving thanks for the inspiration and dedication of those who have carried us through its darkest days."

The website is inspired by the Remember Me campaign initiated in St Paul's Cathedral, London. The online book of commemoration is open to everyone in the community irrespective of race, gender status, sexuality, age, denomination, locality, political representation etc.

Dean Forde said: "Belfast Cathedral wants Lives Reflected to be a shared space where people can bring forward accounts that will help families and individuals on their journey through bereavement and

towards personal healing."

There is also a physical space for reflection inside St Anne's. "Through all the restrictions of these past months, it has been so difficult to gather our memories and share our stories of those we have loved and known, but lost," Dean Forde said. "Lives Reflected allows us a place to share our memories and celebrate the best in the people we know. Lives Reflected can be a place of healing for our losses, and a promise of togetherness for the future."

The cathedral also plans to issue a call for artists to create a unique piece of work to commemorate the pandemic and its impact of people's lives.

Lives Reflected is supported by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. "In this unprecedented public health emergency, the initiative of Belfast Cathedral to offer the whole of our community an online place of remembering and reflection through Lives Reflected is to be warmly welcomed," First Minister Arlene Foster and Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill stated.

"Lives Reflected will stand as a public testimony to all lives lost and act as a public reminder for families that their loved ones will forever be remembered."

To make a dedication, share a personal story, or read the tributes on the Lives Reflected website, visit [www.livesreflected.com](http://www.livesreflected.com).

A derelict piece of land behind St Andrew's Church in Glencairn, north Belfast, is being transformed into a vibrant community garden.

The work, driven by Stephen Whitten, Church Army Evangelist from Connect Base, Connor's North Belfast Centre of Mission, has captured the imagination of the community.

Although Covid-19 has put a halt to many of the activities planned for the developing space, the work on the garden has continued throughout the pandemic.

We paid a visit to the garden on a cold but bright November morning, when volunteers turned out to erect a new shelter to provide a covered space for people to again come together.

Stephen, who is an experienced tree surgeon with a background in rural and countryside management and environmental science, is very much a 'hands-on' project manager.

He negotiated the purchase of the telegraph poles from a farmer on the hills behind Glencairn and, with the assistance of his team of volunteers, cut them to length and transported them to the community garden.

With all necessary hardware on site, Stephen oversaw the raising of the four poles to form the corners of the new shelter. "I was very glad to get them upright. It is great so many of these guys have come along to help. A local gardener also got involved," he said.

## DESIGN

A key player in the design of the shelter was the Rev Adrian Bell, Ordained Local Minister serving in Glencairn and Whiterock. Adrian has a background in joinery, and designed the shelter and oversaw its construction, getting stuck into the practical work.

Stephen said that due to coronavirus restrictions, early plans for events at the community garden had to be curtailed.



Isaac Castle in front of the area of land which will be used for paths and nature trails in the garden.



# Building community



A job well done. Volunteers beside the new shelter in Glencairn Community Garden.

These had included days to bring young people in the area together to do furniture painting and building, and 'Grub in the Garden,' which was due to take place during Holy Week last year.

The new shelter, with its corrugated tin roof, means it will be possible to hold training events in line with Covid-19 guidelines as the shelter is open to the outdoors. A fire inside will allow the space to be used whatever the weather.

Stephen hopes to run an Alpha course in the shelter in the near future. "I am just buzzing because it is great that this is finally happening," he said.

Dean Sterling is one of the volunteers who has been involved in the work. He helped to cut down the redundant telegraph poles further up the mountain and transport them to the garden. Dean was not in employment at the time. "This has given me the chance to get out of the house," he said.

His cousin Jack Cole was also helping out. "I only live up the street and was happy to get involved," he said.

Isaac Castle is the keyholder of St Andrew's Church, Glencairn, and has lived in the area since 1966. The site, which is owned by the Methodist Church, was once a garden centre, but has been unused since the 1990s. "It just became derelict like a jungle. Just like the film 'Gorillas in the Mist,'" Isaac joked.

Holes in the security railings left the site vulnerable to anti-social behaviour, but since October 2019, a transformation has been underway. By February last year,

the site had been cleared with support from local councillor Nicola Verner, who arranged for road sweepers to come and clear the tarmac.

Trees which had been felled were turned into woodchip, which will be used for walkways in the new garden.

An area of land remains overgrown. Isaac explained that the plan is to turn this area in a nature garden. Low hanging branches of the existing trees will be cut back, and pathways created.

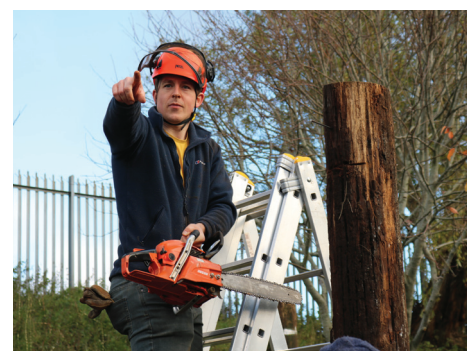
## SAFE

Sam Cole is a parishioner of St Andrew's, and he and his family live adjacent to the church. He said his younger children are looking forward to having a safe new outdoor space next door.

"Glencairn is like a forgotten cul-de-sac," he said. "When I was a lad there were shops here. The project is a good way of getting the community involved. Because of Covid-19, we have had limited numbers on the site, but we are hoping in future to raise money for a man shed and a polytunnel.

"Stephen is making a real difference in this community and this project will continue to grow."

One of the regular volunteers is Emma-Jane Speers, who took up her post as Children and Outreach Worker at Woodvale Methodist Church just days before lockdown in March last year. "I got involved in the community garden in June 2020, and there have been a lot of changes since then," she said. "We did all the clearing, and now it feels like we are



Stephen Whitten from the North Belfast Centre of Mission directing construction of the shelter on November 4.



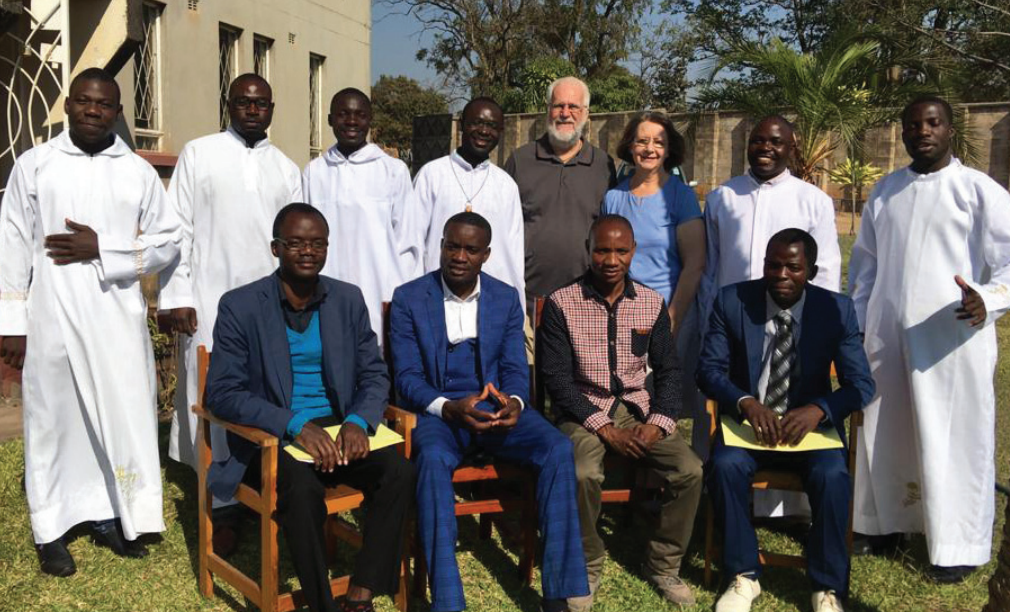
The Rev Adrian Bell in the community garden, Glencairn.

getting to the bare bones of building.

"This will be somewhere children can experience the outdoors, where adults can meet other people and work side by side. I find that if I am doing something practical, I can have a better level of conversation. This was just an empty space, so it is great that it is being used for the community."

And the community garden formed a great backdrop for St Andrew's action-packed video of the Nativity, featuring local adults and children, with Stephen playing an angel coming down from on high! The video can be viewed on the Connect Base Facebook page.





Keith and Lyn Scott with their 2020 students at the St John's Seminary in Kitwe.

# Embedded in the culture of Zambia

The Rev Keith Scott and his wife Lyn have spent 10 of the last 19 years living and working in Zambia. At Christmas, they said a final farewell to their friends and colleagues at the Anglican Seminary of St John the Evangelist in Kitwe and returned to Northern Ireland.

Keith was a parish priest before leaving for Africa in 2002. He spent three years in St Matthew's Parish, Shankill Road, and 14 in the Glens of Antrim.

"We felt we would like to do a spell overseas," he said. "We applied to go to Sierra Leone, but that didn't work out because of the conflict there. Then the opportunity arose to go to Zambia."

Life was not easy, and the family had issues with safe drinking water and power cuts. The shops were poorly stocked, and challenges also included ants, mosquitoes and even killer snakes. Rivers had to be avoided because of regular crocodile attacks.

When Keith and Lyn first moved to Zambia, they went as a family with their son Adam and daughter Hannah. Keith lectured and Lyn worked in the seminary teaching study skills and advanced English. Keith was also parish priest of Chambishi.

"We stayed for six years and returned at the end of 2008 so the children could continue their education in the UK," said Keith. "Adam went to Liverpool University and Hannah went initially to Methody and then Villiers School when we moved to Limerick, where I was rector of Rathkeale Group of Parishes for seven years.

"When we got back to Ireland in 2008, people were complaining about hardships



CMSI Mission Partners Keith and Lyn Scott.

caused by the financial crisis, yet if the supermarkets and shopping centres were anything to go by, this was a place awash with money. In Zambia, we had just one supermarket."

The couple say they thought their time working for CMSI had ended, but God had different plans, and in 2015 they felt called back to CMSI. "Adam was working in Liverpool and Hanna was in London, so everything was settled and it seemed like the right time," said Keith.

In Kitwe, Lyn and Keith moved back into their old bungalow. "There had been very little maintenance done in the time we had been away," said Lyn. "The water supply was temperamental, the electricity just got worse and worse, and during heavy rain the ceiling leaked."

New louvre windows had been installed, but they had been put in upside down. "If they were open, they directed the rain in through the windows, rather than out!" said Keith. "I had to change all those. I learned a lot of new skills, especially in carpentry and electrical work. Billy Smyth [CMSI mission partner] taught me how to weld. When we left in December the house was in a much better state than when we arrived."

## LAPSED

Lyn had taught high level English and literary skills at the seminary, but since they left in 2008, no-one had been able to carry this work on. Some of the courses Keith was teaching had also lapsed, but the students were following a course through a South African seminary.

"The numbers at St John's are tiny," Lyn explained. "When we left in December there were just nine students. The seminary serves the whole of Zambia. There is great diversity in denominations in Zambia, but the Anglican Church there has no money to train students. Their spoken English is fine, but it is their written English they need help with."

Keith taught Old Testament doctrine, Church and Society. He also found he was the 'go-to' person for IT and practical help! "We had all the tools and everybody wanted to borrow them," said Keith. "The number of hammers and children's bikes I welded!"

Keith was also parish priest in Kwacha, taking services there every Sunday.

Lyn said they had seen some changes. "There is now more available to buy if you are wealthy, but there is still huge poverty and dire need. Many people really struggle to make ends meet, but they are grateful for anything. It is a really tough life, but they are very cheerful and resilient and have a strong sense of community and connection."

## VULNERABLE

She said the city of Kitwe is very urban. "It is dirty, smelly and rough. There are shanty towns and a lot of street kids and vulnerable orphans. You would be quite shocked to see how the people live."

A number of Connor parishes, through CMSI, have supported Keith and Lyn's work, including St George's, Belfast; Carnmoney; St John's, Malone, and St Patrick's, Jordanstown. In some cases, parish representatives have had the opportunity to visit Kitwe. They include Archdeacon Stephen McBride, vicar of Antrim; the Rev Aaron McAlister (now rector of Derriagh); Bishop Trevor



Williams; Maurice Elliott from the Church of Ireland Theological Institute; and former Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev Dr Richard Clarke, who travelled to Zambia in 2018. "We enjoyed having visitors and they got a lot out of it," said Lyn.

Their return home came in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. "In March last year, people were very nervous and fearful, but in fact the numbers of infections and deaths were very low," said Lyn. "There were some general guidelines issued, like wearing masks in supermarkets, but you cannot do social distancing in Africa. The people are very tactile and are always hugging and kissing. Some did wear masks for a while, but the novelty soon wore off. Things were very complacent when we left in December, but numbers are going up now."

**'I have learnt a lot from the Scotts in relation to heeding the call of God, in that we should be prepared to go wherever the Lord sends. Keith and Lyn were prepared to fly miles away from their family, and left many things back home so that they could heed the call of God to serve him in a whole different nation and culture. This has inspired me and I should be willing and able to go anywhere the Lord calls me.'**

Geoffrey Banda, former student at St John's Seminary, now serving at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross Parish in the Diocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

Keith added: "Zambia is very much in the orbit of the South African economy, and a lot of produce is imported from Durban, so the South African variant of Covid-19 is now in Zambia.

"The health system there is very fragile, and there will be under-reporting. There will be difficulties testing, and introducing vaccination. However, they do have a well-supported vaccination programme, particularly for children in urban areas."

Lyn said: "In Zambia, they are used to dealing with diseases like malaria, cholera

and Aids, but obviously people are afraid of the unknown and the chances of dying from Covid-19 are higher there because they don't have our Health Service. But the risk of death from snake bites or malaria is also very scary for them."

Keith believes there is still a role for a missionary / mission partner in countries like Zambia. "Two things still need done in Africa as a whole," he said. "Outside of large centres such as Nairobi and the big African churches, there is a great need for training, and delivering training is an expensive exercise.

"They need people like us to do that. If leaders are trained outside a country, that country will lose them. I know Zambians as capable as me who could teach in the seminary but they are now teaching in the US because that is where they qualified and have settled."

### RELATIONSHIPS

He said mission partners are also needed to maintain on-the-ground relationships. "When Archbishop Richard came out we were able to facilitate a formal meeting between him and the Archbishop of Central Province. We can also keep the Western Churches aware of what is going on in Africa," Keith said.



Keith and Lyn Scott are welcomed home by CMSI staff Gillian Maganda and Roger Thompson.

Lyn agreed: "It is also about being embedded in the culture. It takes you to live next door to Zambians and to work with them to see them benefit from that. It is a privilege, we are not just giving - we are also receiving. You don't get that from a short-term visit."

The couple say their timing of their departure was right for the seminary. "It needs to stand on its own two feet," Lyn said. "The seminary has benefited from boreholes and electricity supplies which people have given money towards. Irish people have been generous and we have really appreciated it. But for us the time was right for change.

"We are still with CMSI for six months and had thought we may be assigned somewhere else, but with Covid-19 that hasn't been possible. We don't know what is next, we will leave it to God."



Agherton Well Number One had a big impact in the local community.

## Agherton Parish funds second well

Agherton Parish in Portstewart made a donation of £9,000 to Fields of Life last December. The money was raised after a series of online harvest broadcasts.

In 2019, the parish raised £6,500 to build a well in eastern Uganda. As the coronavirus pandemic tightened its grip, the parish responded to an appeal to build a second Agherton Well. This was to bring clean water to a village suffering the effects of Covid-19.

The rector, the Rev Malcolm Ferry, said: "The appeal was launched after parishioners saw the success of last year's well and the impact it had on the small community.

"The amount raised surprised us all, and the news on Christmas morning that we could indeed build another well was celebrated by everyone. The initial target was to try and reach the £6,500 needed to build the second well so, when we smashed the total, there was a real sense of achievement that even with the lockdown and restrictions the generosity of the parish was evident."

Locally, Agherton Select Vestry also decided to donate some additional funds to the Coleraine Food Bank in recognition of families struggling in difficult times.

## Bishops' Appeal

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal has seen a sharp drop in donations.

But continued generosity of parishes and individuals, combined with the receipt of two legacies, has allowed the Appeal to fund multiple transformative projects, including emergency food for malnourished children in Nepal; shelter for families fleeing conflict in DR Congo and a variety of education projects in Africa.

Learn more about legacies at [www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org](http://www.bishopsappeal.ireland.anglican.org).





Frank Dobbs and Bishop Hilary on Portstewart Strand.

## Amazed by waves!

By Frank Dobbs, Agnerton Parish

I first met Bishop Hilary when I travelled to Yei to develop small group education for health workers in 2010. We met in his office at the cathedral, our drinks brought by a servant on her knees - customary when serving a high-ranking official.

On my next visit in 2013, we celebrated the completion of the first year of Mongo Primary School which Connor Diocese (and Agnerton Parish) had helped to build. After processing to the school with songs and dancing, we had lunch in a tukal. You had to crouch down to get through the doorway and we sat in a circle on plastic patio chairs. While we were eating, a chicken wandered in to look for crumbs.

We had a farewell buffet dinner in the garden of Bishop Hilary's house. In traditional style, all the dishes were made from goat, using all the different parts of the animal.

Bishop Hilary came to Northern Ireland in 2016 and stayed with us in Portstewart for a weekend. We walked on Portstewart Strand and he was amazed to see the waves of the Atlantic Ocean for the first time. South Sudan is land-locked, so he hadn't seen the sea before his visit.

Bishop Hilary has played an important role in developing the Church, education and health provision in Yei, supporting internally displaced refugees, and facilitating peace-making. I wish him well in his retirement and pray for the continuing peace process.

## He made a huge impact on pupils and staff

By Dean John Bond

It was a joy and privilege to have Bishop Hilary and Mama Joyce spend a weekend with us in spring 2008 when I was rector of Broughshane.

Parishioners met with him on Saturday evening and he preached at our Sunday services. The first African bishop to visit the local schools, he made a huge impact on the pupils and staff.

Bishop Hilary is a man with a genuine

The Rt Rev Hilary Luate Adeba, bishop of Connor's partner diocese, has completed his first year. We invited some of those who know him to reflect on his impact.

# 'Land he loves dearly'

By the Ven Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast

I first met Bishop Hilary in January 2007 when, as Archdeacon of Dalriada, I travelled to Yei for the Diocesan Synod where I signed a new partnership agreement between our two dioceses.

During that visit to Yei, the first of four that I was to make, I realised that Bishop Hilary is a man who leads from the front, by conviction and by example.

As he finally achieves a long-deserved retirement with his wife Mama Joyce, I pray that Bishop Hilary will be able to enjoy rest and peace in the land of South Sudan which he loves dearly.

Bishop Hilary grew up in harsh conditions in a remote Sudanese village, but applied himself to schooling and eventually got a job in the university library in Juba. He remained passionate about the importance of education, championing equal education for girls and boys not only in the towns but also in village communities.

In 2007, with a new peace accord in place, Bishop Hilary's ambition was to build a new primary school in each of the archdeaconries of his diocese. It was the partnership with the Diocese of Connor which saw the construction of a purpose-built primary school in the village of Mongo.

However, for Bishop Hilary, Mama Joyce, and their young family, it was their forcible removal many years earlier from the University of Juba as southern Sudanese Christians and internal exiles to a desert refugee camp beyond Khartoum which was pivotal in his life and call to ministry.

In the refugee camp, without even clean running water, Hilary found himself



Dean Stephen Forde, then Archdeacon of Dalriada, with Bishop Hilary in Yei in 2007.

organising the Christian refugees by their parishes and dioceses of origin. The Church organised the provision of water facilities and establishment of schools. During these harshest of years, Hilary's faith strengthened, his understanding of community development grew, and his conviction in the importance of the Church in transforming lives was confirmed.

And it was out of these experiences that Hilary offered himself for ordination in the Episcopal Church of Sudan. He was ultimately elected as Bishop of Yei in Southern Sudan in 2004, in the final years of the bitter civil war (1983 to 2005).

Choosing to live among the people of Yei Diocese in the final years of conflict, and unafraid to speak 'truth to power,' Bishop Hilary was the right bishop to lead his diocese out of conflict, and into the years of relative peace and hope, during which Africa's newest nation, South Sudan, was created in 2011.

Bishop Hilary championed church growth, alongside efficient church governance, and education. He worked tirelessly to build church schools and vocational education with the Yei Vocational Training Centre. He developed the Yei Teacher Training College and was passionate to see the Bishop Allison Theological College permanently re-established in Yei. He also encouraged parishes to engage in community development and micro enterprises.

Yei Diocese encompasses different local tribes, tribal languages and ethnic



## se of Yei, South Sudan, retired this on his ministry and legacy.

communities. Bishop Hilary always strove to ensure that each group was given a respected place in his diocese.

He understood the priority of strategic partnerships. His partnerships with CMS Ireland, Samaritan's Purse, the Parish of Christ Church, Winchester, and the Diocese of Connor, all ensured that financial resources from the World Church found their way to Yei Diocese. In return, those who were world 'Partners in Mission' encountered Christian sisters and brothers whose energy and determined faith through the harshest of trials remains an inspiration.

In January 2013 Bishop Hilary welcomed Bishop Alan Abernethy to Yei and to the Diocesan Synod of that year. Both bishops signed a further five-year partnership agreement between the two dioceses.

But the leadership which Bishop Hilary gave to his people was always at a personal cost. As bishop, Hilary found himself providing for his wider family circle.

When we were with him in Yei in 2010, his nephew suffered a severe spinal injury in a motorbike accident. Bishop Hilary had his nephew driven the 100-mile journey to Juba for medical help, but regrettably the young man did not survive. Yet even during those days of personal pain, Bishop Hilary continued to give of himself to his diocese, and to us as his visitors.

In 2013, civil war returned to South Sudan. Bishop Hilary found himself once again leading a diocese that lived in fear of brutal attack. Many people fled to refugee camps in northern Uganda. Bishop Hilary divided his time between ministering to the diocese in exile in the camps and to those who remained, often in hiding in the bush in Yei.

Although many of the physical resources of diocesan development work would suffer during these further years of violence, the gift of education and skills of self-reliance built up during the short peace could not be undone.

On February 22 2020, a coalition government was formed in South Sudan. Now, with the return of the refugees from Uganda, and the hope of renewed peace, Bishop Hilary can finally take his own well-deserved retirement.

We pray that he and Mama Joyce may have time and space to enjoy their retirement and trust that they may grow older in a land at peace with itself and in a renewed faithfulness to Christ.



# Love beyond measure

## By Bishop Hilary Luete Adeba

The link between Connor and Yei largely came about through the influence of CMS Ireland. We felt lucky to be linked to a diocese in the Church of Ireland - a link which now goes back many years and was a prayer partnership before it developed more practical aspects.

I have seen an exciting relationship, friendship, and expressions of love beyond measure. I've enjoyed this and I testify the best outcomes from this partnership. On many occasions, I visited Northern Ireland as a guest of Connor Diocese as well as CMS Ireland.

I recall my first visit to Larne Rectory, where Archdeacon Stephen Forde and his wife Fiona hosted me for two wonderful days. I enjoyed their hospitality and in our mini tour of the town, Rev Stephen introduced me to my first sight of ships in the ocean and seeing how their movement was being monitored using sophisticated radars. It was an exciting experience and a worthwhile visit, unforgettable.

Agherton Parish took me for a tour of the seaside, looking out to the vast Atlantic Ocean. For me, this involved walking by the sea on the soft, wet sand and, as it was my first such experience on a deadly cold day, I was near freezing point!

In my subsequent visits to Northern Ireland, I was hosted by different parish leaders and spoke to enthusiastic audiences on various occasions in many parishes in Connor Diocese.

Bishop Alan Abernethy and his wife Liz hosted me in their house, and we had a wonderful time talking about the link and how to enjoy it together.

In a reciprocal way, Bishop Alan and the

CMS Ireland META team visited Yei in 2013 and we journeyed to Mongo Parish where I was born. We had a fascinating moment, dancing together to traditional Christian music accompanied by local instruments. Bishop Alan loved it in Mongo, under the cool canopy of mango trees on a dusty but humid January day.

Perhaps the most effective outcome of this link with Connor was the fund Bishop Alan founded for children's education. I named the programme the 'Bishop's Children's Fund' to honour the now retired Bishop Alan. These funds sent from Connor were dedicated to the education of 40 children of all levels, from kindergarten to secondary school. The fund paid the school fees of these children for four years.

These were mostly orphan children and those from very poor families in our congregations. The appreciation for this fund has been tremendous and the link with Connor has been held as an example of very generous giving, with lots of testimonies, some of which, in time, we will send to CMS Ireland.

Recently, another set of funds has arrived to replenish the 'Bishop's Children's Fund.' There have been many other funds for various other projects in my diocese. We continue to pray that the link grows to become even stronger so that the visitations may resume once coronavirus is eradicated.





Stoneyford parishioners and the rector, the Rev John Farr, with some feathered friends.

## Stoneyford's gifts to those in poverty

The Rev John Farr and parishioners of St John's Parish, Stoneyford, have donated £1,300 to Christian Aid by buying virtual Charity Gifts for people in extreme poverty. These gifts help transform lives around the world, and include training women to become tailors or giving beehives and fruit tree saplings to families to boost their household income.

With farmers making up many members of the rural parish, Stoneyford parishioners chose to support Christian Aid's agriculture programmes, buying virtual farm animals - chickens, turkeys and goats.

Chickens and turkeys provide eggs that can be eaten or sold for cash at the local market, while goats tolerate drought and provide milk, meat and manure.

Organiser Norma Parker said: "I was delighted that we managed to raise so much, especially as we're only a small congregation and church services are being live-streamed during the lockdown."

Christian Aid Ireland Chief Executive Rosamond Bennett said: "The good people of Stoneyford Parish always show great love for their global neighbours. Climate change is causing a hunger crisis in many of the world's poorest countries and the coronavirus pandemic is increasing extreme poverty. It is more important than ever that we help people during these times of crisis." For more information visit [www.caid.ie/CharityGifts](http://www.caid.ie/CharityGifts).

## 'Rectory Reflections'

The Rev Ian Magowan, St Saviour's, Connor, and St Patrick's, Antrim, has published 'Rectory Reflections.'

"This book includes 24 sermons which I trust will encourage and help us in our faith and walk with God. It is important that we realise that no matter what happens, God is still in control and he is always there for us," Ian said.

Copies of 'Rectory Reflections' are available directly from Ian.

# Black Santa raises £230,00 for charity

Despite the pandemic, Belfast Cathedral's Black Santa Appeal 2020 raised an incredible £230,000!

This was distributed to 232 organisations working with the elderly, the young, people affected by unemployment and homelessness, mental health and the Arts. There was also a donation to Christian Aid.

"The total raised is quite amazing, given the challenges of Covid-19," said Dean Stephen Forde, who has completed three years as Black Santa in a cathedral tradition dating back to 1976.

He said the 2020 appeal had been boosted by a 'very generous legacy,' but added that even without the legacy, fundraising generated £130,000 - only £40,000 less than the previous year's total.

The Dean expressed his gratitude to Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) whose online partnership, including the creation of a dedicated Black Santa website, had raised more than £21,000.

During the annual sit-out, which began on December 17 and ended on Christmas Eve, Dean Forde was supported by the bishops of Connor and Down and Dromore, cathedral clergy and its canons.

With Covid-19 restrictions, it was a somewhat different event compared to previous years. The pandemic meant each day had new challenges for the Dean.

Writing during his week on the steps of St Anne's, Dean Forde said: "Each year, I pull on thick socks and boots to keep my feet warm. I tightly fasten the traditional black

cloak which gives its name to Black Santa. But this year, there is more to do. I have to fix my face covering over my mouth. Somehow I have to stop my glasses from steaming up. I have to ensure 2m social distancing is maintained. It is all part of that strange new world we have entered."

A spokesperson for PwC said: "It was an absolute privilege to support the team at the cathedral with the Black Santa 2020 campaign. Local charities have been facing huge funding challenges through the pandemic, and the needs of the people who require support are greater than ever."

Funds raised by the Black Santa Appeal are traditionally distributed to charity representatives at the Good Samaritans Service held each year on the first Sunday in February.

This year, because of the coronavirus restrictions, the awards were sent directly to each charity who in turn sent pictures illustrating the work they do, and these were turned into a Good Samaritans' photomontage.

Dean Forde thanked everyone who had donated to this year's Black Santa. "For every child, Christmas is about the power of hope," he said. "The gift of a vaccine. The generosity of carers who will not give up. The resilience of our human spirit in the face of adversity. The giving of pennies that makes possible amazing work by a myriad of charities."



Black Santa, Dean Stephen Forde, centre, supported on day one of the sit-out by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, left, and the Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev David McClay.



# To the young people in Connor Diocese...

I think about you often! Whether you have come to a diocesan youth event or I've met you at a parish event, or maybe we've never met before – hi, I'm Christina! But in this lockdown, I've taken time to pray for the young people in each parish, so that's you!

Most of us are struggling right now. Whether that be just stuck at home, missing our friends or finding it hard to notice God at work. I wonder if you've missed being at church. You might have missed youth group or the routine of coming together with others each week; you might miss the music leading you to reflect on ancient truths, or your rector explaining part of the Bible.

In Hebrews 12:1-2a (ERV) it says:

"We have all these great people around us as examples. Their lives tell us what faith means. So, we too should run the race that is before us and never quit. We should remove from our lives anything that would slow us down and the sin that so often makes us fall. We must never stop looking to Jesus. He is the leader of our faith, and he is the one who makes our faith complete."

Just so you know, it is ok to struggle right now. You don't have to pretend everything is ok. Our church families should give us the opportunity to be honest about how we are feeling and bring those things to God. So right now, take a moment, and just share with God what you are feeling.

Then there are two great things I want to point out in this bit of the Bible that you've just read.

The first one is that other people help us follow Jesus. Your church family is filled with people also seeking to follow God. Some might have been doing it for a short while, whereas others have been following God for ages! When we look at their lives, we can see an example of what it means to live as a Christian. Have a think about the people in your parish. What could you learn from them about exploring faith?

Secondly, we should never stop looking to

Jesus. By focusing on Jesus in these days, we are reminded that he loves us and he came to save us. Fixing our eyes on Jesus means we can think about our daily life in a different way and hold onto this incredible hope.

Young person...

Your parish cares for you.

I will continue to pray for you.

Keep looking to Jesus!

**Christina Baillie** is Diocesan Youth Officer for Connor Diocese. You can ask Christina to join an online youth group or contribute to your Sunday online services by contacting her on [christinabaillie@connordiocese.org](mailto:christinabaillie@connordiocese.org). For updates and encouragements for young people and leaders, please follow Engage Connor Youth on Facebook and Instagram.



## Escape Rooms prove to be great fun

Youth leaders across Connor Diocese have found that a great way to enthuse an online gathering is the use of Escape Rooms. These provide a task for a small group, either racing against each other in breakout rooms or trying to achieve the quickest time.

Youth groups from across Connor have used a variety of these resources to connect with young people, including the set of Escape Rooms from Church Youth Ministry and an Escape Room from Macmillan.

Christina Baillie, Diocesan Youth Officer, said: "Escape Rooms have been a great activity for some fun and connection online. I have been able to host these for youth groups and it's been a great success. Many of our young people - and leaders - get very competitive, and it's something quite different to other online activities."

## Easter resource

Connor Diocesan Youth Officer Christina Baillie has created a new Easter resource for leaders and clergy with a few ideas for young people and their parish.

This is in a similar vein to the very successful Christmas resources put together by Christina and Children's Officer Jill Hamilton. Jill has also contributed to the Easter Resource.

Christina's Easter Resource can be downloaded from the Youth/Resources section of the diocesan website.



# Much to be thankful for



By Sally Cotter, Connor MU Diocesan President

Spring has arrived and it's wonderful to see nature reawakening and the gardens coming to life again. The flowers that we look forward to reappearing each year are a reminder of the normality that we seem to have lost sight of.

Yet, just as the flowers have been waiting to emerge, we too are following the news, eagerly awaiting instructions to resume our preferred activities. There are only so many electronic or virtual meetings that we can cope with! We all miss the warmth of human contact and the opportunities to meet in real time in a real way with other people.

The cold days of winter are past, and we are all looking forward to getting out and about more, once current restrictions have been relaxed.

It was last Lent when everything changed and we have run that cycle a second time. Before long, many of us will have received at least our first Covid-19 vaccination and will be expecting to have our second one in April or May. Many of the experts were telling us in the middle of last year that it

could take years for a viable vaccine to become available. We have much to be thankful for.

Whilst we are mourning the loss of friends and loved ones during the pandemic, we are now in a much better place than we had any real reason to expect.

Let's praise God for human ingenuity in science and the many examples of inspiring, heroic, compassionate individual acts. We have learned much about one another and some of the lessons from these dark times will be of great practical benefit in the years ahead.

Mothers' Union meetings and services of a traditional kind have had to be put on hold for almost a year now. This has by no means meant that everything has ground to a halt. Members have been busy sewing

masks and scrubs as well as knitting.

Innovative ways of meeting have been discovered and there have been many Zoom meetings at diocesan and branch level. We have had coffee mornings and prayer breakfasts, not to mention catching up with family and friends, all thanks to the wonders of modern technology. Some branches have managed to meet face-to-face in the intervals between lockdowns and enjoyed quizzes or craft competitions and other socially distanced activities.

For those who don't have access to technology, nothing beats a friendly phone call or even a plant and card left on a doorstep when you are out for your daily exercise. There are also folk who need assistance with shopping or collecting prescriptions, and it is really easy to help in this way.

The MU Theme for 2021 is 'Rebuilding Hope and Confidence.' Thanks to the arrival of the Covid vaccine, we can all look forward to better times ahead. We hope that MU members might be able to start meeting together again in the autumn.



Items delivered to Antrim Hospital from MU members in St Jude's, Muckamore, and the Pins & Needles group in Killead and Gartree.



MU members in St Jude's, Muckamore, donated toys at Christmas to Muckamore Parish Development Association for children in the local community. From left: Margaret Johnston, Irene Paget (branch chair), Joan Currie, Ellen McKelvey and Betty Ramsey.

Trauma Teddies knit by an MU member in St John's, Ballyclare.



Wash bags donated by Christ Church, Lisburn, MU to Lagan Valley Hospital.



Jumpers knit by Jean Hughes from Lisburn Cathedral for Baby Basics.

## Hamper Appeal

Magheragall Mothers' Union supported the annual Barnardo's Christmas Hamper Appeal. Although churches were closed, the regulations permitted church halls to be used for provision of food relief.

Two separate shifts kept the people involved in the packing process to a minimum. Members also collected toiletries for wash bags for hospitals and for the women's refuge.

On December 2, there were 23 hampers ready to go to families.

## Quick response to hospital



Archdeacon Stephen McBride, Connor MU Chaplain, delivers wash bags from Connor MU members to Hospital Chaplain Sanna Mallon in the church within Musgrave Park Hospital.



## Service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning



Pictured at the Connor Mothers' Union Service of Thanksgiving are, from left: Archdeacon Stephen McBride, Connor MU Chaplain; June Butler, All-Ireland President; Sally Cotter, Connor MU President; and the Rt Rev George Davison, Bishop of Connor.

Connor Mothers' Union held a Service of Thanksgiving and Commissioning of Trustees and Executive Members in All Saints' Parish Church, Antrim, on October 25 2020.

The service, with the theme Building Hope and Confidence, was conducted within Covid-19 guidelines and was attended by Trustees and Executive members only. Diocesan President Sally Cotter said members were delighted to be able to worship together again in person.

The service was conducted by Connor MU Chaplain, the Ven Dr Stephen McBride, vicar of Antrim and Archdeacon of Connor. He was assisted by Clare Thompson, who is in training for the Local Ordained Ministry. It was live-streamed for others to join in online.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, was present and offered members much encouragement in his address. The lessons and prayers were read by members of Executive.

## chaplain's request

Connor Mothers' Union is meeting a vital need by supplying emergency wash bags for patients in two large Belfast hospitals.

In mid-January, the MU received a request from Sanna Mallon, Church of Ireland Chaplain in the Royal Victoria and Musgrave Park hospitals, for help with providing wash bags for patients. Sanna said: "More and more patients are coming into these hospitals and have not even a toothbrush with them. Sometimes they have to wait a week before their loved ones can bring a wash bag."

Members donated 75 wash bags, and continue to collect items to supply more.

# In celebration of church musicians

A Service of Choral Evensong was held in Belfast Cathedral 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. Due to Covid-19, there was a delay in completing these awards in 2020 as tutors were unable to teach because of social distancing, and because opening restrictions placed on cathedrals and churches limited access to the pipe organs.

The scheme, in its 30th year, helps provide and equip organists for public worship. It was established in 1990 when an anonymous benefactor, recognising the importance of the ministry of music in parish life and worship, provided a very generous endowment to train organists in the dioceses. A Trust was set up and administered by the Church of Ireland Trustees and a Board of Management.

Those attending the service were welcomed by the Very Rev Stephen Forde, Dean of Belfast. Music was directed by Cathedral Organist Matthew Owens, assisted by Jack Wilson who accompanied the Cathedral Choir on the organ. Lessons were read by Board members, Lady Brenda Sheil and Gerald Hill.

Another Board member, the Rev Julie Bell, a Minor Canon of the Cathedral, delivered the sermon, and Chancellor John Auchmuty, Chairman of the Board, led prayers, giving thanks to God for the gift of

music and for the work and ministry of the organ scholarship tutors, Dr Joe McKee, Michael McCracken and the Rev Dr Ian Mills.

When the service took place on September 27, there were five scholars in the third year of training - Rebekah Wilson, All Saints' Belfast; Callum Whiteside, St Mark's, Ballysillan; Jane Knowles, Broomhedge; Victoria Irwin, St John's, Whitehouse; and Amy Norris, Kilmore.

Second year pupils are Glen English, St John's, Magherally; Jack McCabe, Killinchy, Kilmoody and Tullynakill; Sean Turner, Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin; and Tanya Zachara, St Mark's, Dundela.

First year pupils are David Dunlop, All Saints', Belfast; and Clare Kelly, St Patrick's, Jordanstown.

The new scholars are Larissa Fleck, St Patrick's, Armoy; Mark McKinty and Hannah Shaw, both from St Cedma's, Larne; and Grace Steed, St Mark's, Dundela.

A year's course consists of approximately 20 lessons, each of an hour's duration, at fortnightly intervals. The scholars are expected to practise and prepare for each lesson.

**Report by Angela Kerr**



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



# A bright future for Tiger's Bay families

The Parish of St Paul and St Barnabas in York Street, Belfast, is looking forward to the day it can fully open its newly refurbished parish hall to the whole community.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, rededicated the hall, along with several new windows, last October.

The Rev Dr Isobel (Isy) Hawthorne-Steele, then curate-in-charge, said the hall, which is based in the old St Paul's Schoolhouse at the back of the church in the Tiger's Bay area, was extensively used by the community. The building is 186-years-old and a famous past pupil is the flautist James Galway.

The hall was in serious need of refurbishment to make it fit for purpose, and shortly before lockdown in March last year, a number of the groups moved their activities into the main church and work got underway.

Isy said the refurbishment had been a tremendous success. "The facilities now include a high standard of health and safety provision; a place where all ages can meet in comfort in properly heated and ventilated spaces; an excellent hygienic kitchen with comfortable seating areas for small group work; a very large fully functioning sports hall; and a large conference-style room that can easily be adapted to suit the needs of breakout groups or café symposiums."

She added that during the work, nine windows were exposed fully and were found to be arched. The parish decided it wished to keep these, and the windows, all sponsored by parishioners in memory of loved ones, were dedicated by Bishop George.

A range of groups have applied to use the hall in future. "This will not only fulfil our priority aim of outreach into the local community, but will provide an income in order to maintain the parish hall to a high standard of upkeep," said Isy. "It will also help us with future plans such as fundraising towards the installation of a lift, expanding storage space, and a breakthrough to join the church premises with the hall."

Isy said that according to NISRA statistics, the church is located in an area of high deprivation and is therefore a much-needed facility. Outreach activities already



The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, rededicates St Paul and St Barnabas' refurbished parish hall after the Harvest Thanksgiving Service on October 18.

established at St Paul and St Barnabas include the Blaze Project which works with local schools, sharing the gospel with children through the medium of drama.

"This provided us with an opportunity to show children each aspect of worship in the church building, explaining function and purpose," said Isy. "This was supported by the Ulster University Widening Access Community Development Programme which provided learning packs. Many members of our congregation are involved in this project."

## WELCOMING

"Often this is the only opportunity these children have to come inside church. Our aim is to make it less of an imposing building in their community, and a friendly, welcoming, fun and interesting learning place to be, to encounter Jesus."

St Paul and St Barnabas also runs an AQE tuition project which has had an 80 per cent success rate. "This is a service for children that is based upon the ethos of an inclusive educational access for all children, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged," said Isy. "This is widely recognised throughout the community and schools as being a highly

valued educational project, servicing a real need to disadvantaged children."

Children and families in the area have also enjoyed Messy Church at St Paul and St Barnabas, and the church and hall is used by the church's HOPE professional counselling project, which receives referrals from clergy and other professional counselling agencies and organisations.

Isy said it was hoped this project may be expanded. "The current extremely high rates of mental health problems and, specifically, the very high incidents of suicide and suicide attempts in this demographic region indicate a high level of need," she said.

The parish has also formed a strong partnership with All Nations Ministry, and the project has established a drop-in centre which is open to everyone in the community. It is attended primarily by asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and their families and operates a foodbank and clothes bank for this group.

The parish has cultivated good relationships with the community PSNI, who, outside lockdown, provided weekly sports activities for young people.

St Paul and St Barnabas also has a collaborative relationship with Ulster University's Widening Access Community Development Programme which aims to raise the self-confidence and self-esteem of participants by exploring barriers to formal learning.

"The exercises and assignments are aimed at giving students an opportunity to learn academic writing skills and prepare them for advanced learning with an access route to university degree level four," said Isy.

This programme was offered firstly to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and is the subject of an article: 'Breaking the Cultural Silence Imposed upon Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants: A Snapshot of the Current Faith-Based Project in Tiger's Bay (North Belfast),' published in 'Adult Learner: The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education' in 2018.

St Paul and St Barnabas has developed a logo - incorporating the five windows of the church and the cross to illustrate Christ at the centre of worship and activities - and its strapline - TLC (Transforming, Loving, Caring) - was drawn from the parish mission statement.

The parish employed a children and families' worker who worked closely with local primary schools and initiated the parent and toddler group, Little Lambs. A project manager was appointed,



## Degrees of success for Karen and Christina



Christina Baillie, left, and Karen Webb.

Congratulations to two members of the Connor Diocesan Development Team who have both graduated with a Master's Degree in Theology.

Connor Youth Officer Christina Baillie and Church Army Evangelist with the North Belfast Centre of Mission, Karen Webb, embarked on the degree with the University of Cumbria unaware the other was also undertaking the course!

Christina, who has been with Connor Diocese for five years, already holds an Undergraduate Degree in Social Work from Queen's University, Belfast.

"I wanted to learn more about God at a deeper level and to consider a wider range of academic thought on theological issues," Christina said. "In addition, I hoped for an experience which would advance my own theological understanding as this applies to my role, by equipping me to engage in complex issues and seek to share these with young people."

Karen, who works at Connect Base in Shankill Road and has been with Connor Diocese since 2015, has a Joint Honours Degree in Computers and Business from Queen's University and has Church Army Training through the University of York.

"God inspired me to do the Master's - a chance lifting of a leaflet at Summer Madness two years ago and a conversation with one of the staff from Belfast Bible College," Karen said.

"Every obstacle I put up for not doing it was knocked down, and so I found myself applying on the last day of applications!

"Christina and I both doing it was amazing! I was at uni the first time with her dad who did computer science with me! I was so thankful to have someone I knew and worked with. I was the oldest woman doing it by a generation, but Christina and all the other young women made me feel part of the gang. I reclaimed my youth!"



Some before and after pictures of the parish hall of St Paul and St Barnabas.

whose role included securing further funding to renovate the hall to make it fit for purpose. The parish also employed a family visitor who made further intergenerational connections within the local area.

"The impact of the projects has been realised in the increased footfall and new partnerships forged with schools and local groups such as the migrant, asylum seekers and refugees," said Isy.

### VITAL

"We are currently seeking other funds to progress to the next stage. The current Covid-19 restrictions have affected our roll-out, however we continue to support our HOPE counselling project which is a vital resource for the local community during this pandemic."

The re-dedication of the parish hall and dedication of the windows by Bishop George took place just weeks before Isy stepped down from her role as curate-in-charge of St Paul and St Barnabas on November 1. She is now Priest-in-Charge

in Greenisland Parish.

"I feel I have taken this project as far as I can," said Isy. "As a leader, I think it is really important to

listen to the Holy Spirit and to know when it's time to make way for God's chosen leader/s to continue to work out his plan.

"There is so much potential here, the members of the church are loving and full of God's grace. They are a praying people and that is the key to any missional work. I know God has a great plan of revival in this area."

The projects run by St Paul and St Barnabas Parish Church have received funding from the following:

- Church of Ireland Priorities Fund
- Church of Ireland Children & Orphans Society
- St James' Endowment Fund
- BIFFA (grant scheme for 'community hub' project refurbishment)



# Dean Brian Moller

The late Dean Brian Moller's life was one 'packed full of interest and energy, activity and achievement over the course of 85 years,' Canon Ronnie Nesbitt said at the funeral service of the former dean, held in Bangor Abbey on January 19.

Describing Dean Moller as 'one of God's most faithful and devoted servants,' Canon Nesbitt said he would have celebrated the 60th anniversary of his ordination this year.

"But there is a lovely sense of completion as we meet, in that a parochial ministry that began 60 years ago in St Peter's on the Antrim Road where Brian was appointed curate-assistant should also have ended there, as Brian gave his final address from its familiar pulpit on the first Sunday of this new year," Canon Nesbitt said.

He spoke of Dean Moller's contribution to the wider church at diocesan and general synods, as Dean of Connor, in filling for a time the roles of Director of Ordinands and Examining Chaplain in Connor Diocese. As chaplain to Stranmillis, Brian also had significant influence on a generation of



teachers and ordinands, Canon Nesbitt said.

"Above all, Brian was a man of sincere and convinced faith in Christ, steeped in liturgy

of the Church of Ireland of course! He was kind and generous, warm hearted and loving. Someone who invested himself in the lives of others. Like Barnabas, a 'son of encouragement,' and as a friend or colleague, utterly dependable. Someone who laughed often."

Canon Nesbitt said music and singing were Dean Moller's 'joy and delight,' adding that 'his very fine tenor voice graced so many occasions both secular and sacred.'

Dean Moller was brought up in Belfast, the son of Edward, a Danish-born marine draughtsman with Harland and Wolff, and Emily. On the Easter Tuesday of 1941, the family was caught up in the air raid on Belfast and as a six-year-old, Brian could remember being dug out of the rubble of his home by soldiers.

He grew up in Lisburn, studied at Friends' School and his choral singing at Lisburn Cathedral was, Dean Nesbitt said, to foster a growing sense of vocation. Before that, Brian had a spell in stockbroking and, as a student, a conductor on the Blackpool trams.

Canon Nesbitt outlined how Dean Moller commenced studies at Trinity College Dublin, followed by his Divinity Testimonium

# Canon Hugh Hopkins

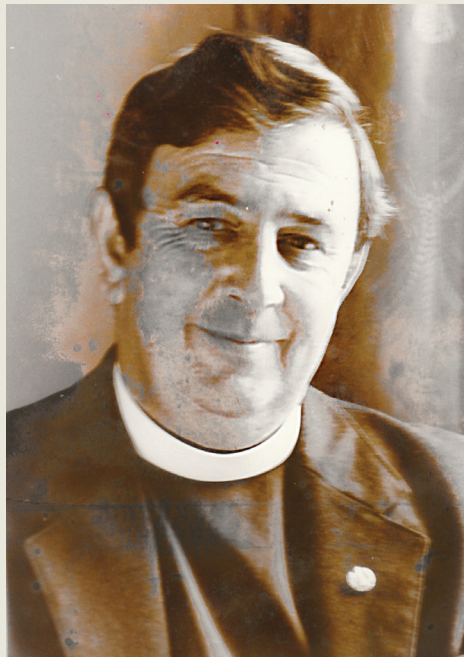
The funeral service of the Rev Canon Hugh Hopkins took place in Dunluce Parish Church, Bushmills, on November 24.

Paying tribute to Canon Hopkins, the Rev Brian Stewart, rector of St George's, Belfast, said he was a priest who was steeped in the liturgical and pastoral tradition of the Church of Ireland.

He started life as a Presbyterian, and was an only child - his father was killed in action in 1944. Hugh went to school in Carrickfergus. He loved music and learnt to play the flute.

He was a parishioner of St Nicholas' Parish Church, and was deeply involved in parish life as a bellringer, Sunday School teacher, tennis captain, and in the badminton club, where he first met his wife Lily.

Hugh worked for the 'Carrick Advertiser' and later in Dorman's Printers, Belfast. He loved producing parish magazines and Brian said that working in Belfast,



St George's was a great draw for Hugh with its early weekday Holy Communion at 7.30am. There, he came under the influence of two rectors: St John Pike, later Bishop of Gambia, and from 1958

onwards, Edgar Turner. Both encouraged Hugh's growing sense of vocation to the priesthood.

Hugh went to Trinity College Dublin in 1960 to study Biblical Studies. He was ordained deacon in 1962 and priest the following year, and served his title in the Parish of Kilconriola (Ballymena) under Canon Craig. In 1964, he came to Belfast to serve a second curacy in Christ Church, Durham Street, and often helped out at the weekday services in St George's.

Christ Church was followed by his first incumbency in Ballintoy, from 1967-72, and then St Ninian's, Whitewell Road. Hugh and Lily stayed in north Belfast for nine years at the height of The Troubles, Brian said, in the most difficult of circumstances and possibly the most bitterly divided part of the city.

Hugh found the time to pursue a BA in Arts through the fledgling Open University and, sensing the importance of community relationships and opposing sectarianism, he joined with Roman Catholic and Protestant clergy in various inter-church endeavours.

After St Ninian's, Hugh spent five years



at the Divinity Hostel. After ordination, he served curacies at St Peter's and in Larne, with particular responsibility for Craig Hill. In 1968, he was appointed as curate-in-charge of St Comgall's, Rathcoole, later rector, staying there until his appointment to St Bartholomew's in 1986.

He said that once the dean eventually retired, he didn't slow down, founding the Retired Clergy Association, being president of Friends' Old Scholars' Association, an enthusiastic member of Probus and, in later years, an inveterate traveller.

"But above all he was a fixer and mender. We need look no further than the Bishop's Crozier, mended by Brian when a former bishop, who shall remain nameless, got it stuck in a gratin in Down Cathedral. In fact, Brian mended four croziers in all in Connor and Down and Dromore dioceses.

"Brian also had the knack of mending people as well. It's as a mender and fixer we will remember him here. Mender of so many things, lots of clocks, including the clock in the tower which was restored and upgraded in 2014 in memory of Kay."

Dean Moller was predeceased by his wife Kay. He is survived by his sons Jeremy and Julian, Jeremy's wife Elaine, and wider family circle.

in the new Church of the Holy Spirit in Mossley, before the family moved to Portrush where he served as rector of Ballywillan Parish for 10 years from 1886.

Hugh's health meant he had to retire slightly early in 1996, two years after he had been made a Canon of St Anne's Cathedral. He and Lily retired to Bushmills, where he continued to help out in the parish church.

He enjoyed Greek study and got more involved in the Diabetic Association and Probus, where he ended up as chairman. He also devoted time to the JMECA (Jerusalem and Middle East Church Association) as Irish treasurer.

Concluding, Brian said: "Hugh was a fine preacher, a faithful pastor, a wise and sensitive rector - all in all, a devout and holy priest of the Church. He was a witty and funny man, a music lover, a scholar, someone with an enquiring mind, widely and deeply read, who had fixed his faith firmly on solid foundations - the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. We will all miss him and his smile so much..."

Canon Hopkins is survived by his wife Lily and daughter Ruth.



## Transforming Lives

Connect Base is seeking volunteers to help with Transforming Lives for Good (TLG) - a mentoring programme for upper primary aged children who are in danger of being excluded from school.

Coaches meet with a child for one hour a week for a year, helping the child - through craft projects and other resources - to emotionally mature and be able to cope with the learning environment. Simply to be a safe adult for them.

Karen Webb, Connect Base Evangelist, said: "In the Greater Shankill area, we started our journey with TLG in 2017 with just six coaches. This increased to 15

coaches in 2018. We had been working in two different schools in the Greater Shankill area before Covid restrictions.

"Going forward, we are so aware that many more children in this area will be struggling with anxiety, emotional distress and will have fallen behind in learning. The TLG training for coaches/mentors is exceptional and no coach feels ill prepared going into a session with a child.

"We would love to be able to go into more schools with this wonderful programme, but we need more people prepared to train as a TLG mentor." For more information, please contact Karen at [karen.webb@churcharmy.org](mailto:karen.webb@churcharmy.org).

- Volunteers are also needed to help children in the Shankill area with their reading. The Rev Canon Bro David Jardine, Director of Equipping for Life, said the charity is looking 50-70 volunteer tutors to add to an established team of 160 poised to help when permitted to return to schools. For more information, visit [www.equippingforlife.org.uk](http://www.equippingforlife.org.uk).

# Dedicated service!

Two officers from the Church Lads' and Church Girls' Brigade (CLCGB) in Connor have chalked up more than 100 years of service between them.

David Gamble joined the Brigade in St Paul's Company, Lisburn, in 1968. In the 1970s, he played on the Company's successful football team, represented the Ulster Regiment in cross country and athletics at national competitions and set a Brigade record for the 800m in the late 1970s. He played the flute in the Company's Marching Band.

David was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1980 and promoted to Lieutenant in 1984. From 1990 until 1994, he was Captain of the Company but had to stand down due to work commitments. He continues to act as an Officer in the Company, working with the section for 7-10 year olds. He was presented with a fourth 'five year rose' for his 30 years medal at a 'virtual service' by St Paul's rector, the Rev Arthur Young, assisted by present Captain, Andrew Maze.

Johnny Conn has been awarded the 'Officers' Service Medal.' He joined the Senior Corps of the Carnmoney CLB Company in 1970. Johnny competed in Brigade handball, football and athletics competitions, and received the Brigade's 'Church Service Award' in the early 70s.

After attending Officer Training, Johnny



CLCGB stalwarts David Gamble, left, and Johnny Conn.

was commissioned as Second Lieutenant, promoted to Lieutenant. He was Captain of the Carnmoney Company from 1977 until 1998, and in 1992 he established a Church Girls' Brigade unit for the parish. He also played the bass drum in the Company's Marching Band.

Johnny also worked at Battalion and Regimental level. He was Publicity Officer under the late Harry Anderson, Ulster Regiment CO, and assisted the Training Officer. In 1991, he was appointed Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion. He recently did a second term as Publicity Officer under Melvyn Lockhart, the present CO, and has always had a passion to record the Brigade's history.



# 100th birthdays!



Meta McSeveney, a parishioner of St John's, Glynn, celebrated her 100th birthday on February 20 2021.



Billy Adair, a lifelong parishioner of St George's, Belfast, and well-known church organist, celebrated his 100th birthday on February 16 2021.



Magheragall parishioner Doreen McKee celebrated her 100th birthday on December 15 2020.



Violet McKnight, a parishioner of St Paul and St Barnabas, Belfast, wrapped up warmly to celebrate her 100th birthday on October 25 2020.



Baking Buddies, a project developed by St Michael's and St Stephen's, Belfast, recently returned for four weeks. Using the ingredients supplied, these creative children followed the online videos to cook up tasty pizzas.

## Pictures from around the diocese



At the end of March, Connor Diocese said farewell to Jill Hamilton who has been Children's Project Development Officer for the past seven years. Jill, pictured with her husband Geoff, is moving to Kilhome Parish, Annalong, Diocese of Down and Dromore, where Geoff has been appointed rector.



Margaret Marshall, mother of Roslyn Graham, chairperson of Ballymoney, Finvoy and Rasharkin Mothers' Union, surrounded by the 160 teddies she knit for Baby Basics Belfast.



Clergy from Lisburn and Derriagh Rural Deanery were joined by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, when they met at Christ Church, Lisburn, on November 12 2020. Bishop Ken Clarke (Fanta) was the speaker and shared from Philippians on Joy and Prayer.



Dolly Watson, a founder member of St Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn, who celebrated her 100th birthday on October 8 2020. Photo: Norman Briggs.



Victoria McClements sang at Antrim Parish's Service of Morning Prayer on January 31, along with her boyfriend Conor Taggart. The talented couple have been making a name for themselves as 'Bello Duo.'